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**The Influence of National Culture on the Practice of Project  
Management: A Study of Information and Communication  
Technology Projects in Saudi Arabia**

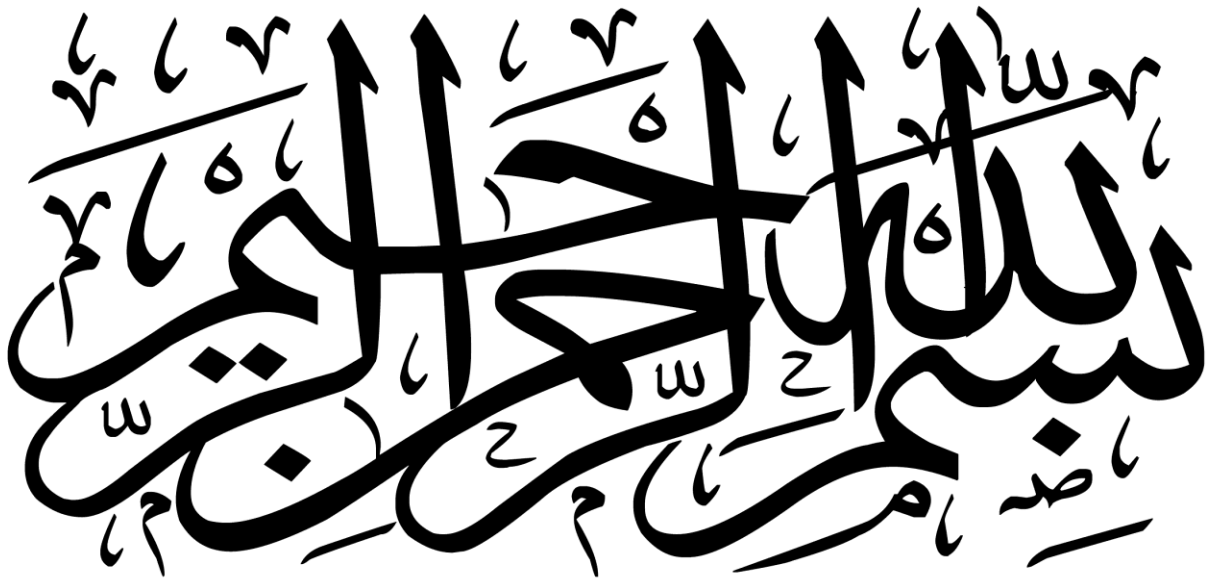
**ROMIL SALAH**

**A thesis submitted in partial fulfilment  
of the requirements of the  
University of Northumbria at Newcastle  
for the degree of  
Doctor of Philosophy**



**Research undertaken in the  
Faculty of Engineering and Environment**

**August 2016**



**IN THE NAME OF ALLAH**

**THE MOST BENEFICENT, THE MOST MERCIFUL**

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## **DECLARATION**

I declare that the work contained in this thesis has not been submitted for any other award and that it is all my own work. I also confirm that this work fully acknowledges opinions, ideas and contributions from the work of others.

**I declare that the Word Count of this Thesis is 81,464 words**

Name: Romil Salah

Signature:

Date: 8 August 2016

## ABSTRACT

In an ever-shrinking world with advancing technology many organizations have expanded their operations internationally and experienced challenges of how to manage projects in areas with different cultural backgrounds. In a culturally unique country, like the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA), the influence of national culture on project management has to be considered, and there is additional complexity in that most project teams are themselves diverse and multi-cultural. KSA has become one of the wealthiest countries in the world, however, many of its projects, especially in the Information and Communication Technology (ICT) sector, still fail dramatically for financial, managerial, political, social and cultural reasons. In KSA, culture is a crucial factor in business, and the management of projects is no exception.

The aim of this research is to contribute to more successful delivery of ICT projects in KSA. The overall commonly-held belief is that there are elements of national culture in KSA that impact the implementation of project management processes on ICT projects. Using Hofstede's cultural model as a basis, a conceptual framework has been created that explores and explains the impact of KSA national culture on ICT project management as characterised by the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBok)<sup>1</sup> principles. A qualitative research approach was used to collect data from four private and public sector ICT projects, in their natural settings, using a multiple case study approach. Data were collected using semi-structured interviews and examination of project documentation and a cross-case analysis was performed. The conceptual framework is a very useful planning tool for human resourcing purposes is best used for the ICT project management professionals in understanding how project management practices, procedures, tools and techniques are implemented and how they are impacted by cultural factors. The findings in this study have confirmed that the dimensions of Power Distance Index (PDI), Individualism (IDV) and Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) have a significant impact on project management in KSA, but that Long-Term Orientation (LTO), Masculinity (MAS) and Indulgence (IND) have a lesser impact.

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<sup>1</sup> PMBoK is a book, by Project Management Institute (PMI), which presents a set of standard terminology and guidelines for project management.

## **ACKNOWLEDGEMENT**

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My sincere thanks also go to my family for being supportive and patient during the time it has taken to complete this PhD thesis.

Finally, I would like to thank all the ICT professionals who agreed to participate in this study.

## LIST OF ACRONYMS

4G	4 <sup>th</sup> Generation
ANSI	American National Standard Institute
ARAMCO	Arab American Corporation
BBC	British Broadcasting Corporation
CAE	Computer Aided Engineering
CCTV	Closed Circuit TV
CIA	Central Intelligence Agency
CITC	Communication and Information Technology Commission
CSF	Critical Success Factor
DSM	Design Structure Matrix
ENS	Enterprise Networking Solutions
ERP	Enterprise Resource Planning
ESS	Enterprise Software Solutions
GCC	Gulf Corporation Council
GDP	Gross Domestic Product
GLOBE	Global Leadership and Organizational Behavior Effectiveness
GSM	Global System for Mobile
ICT	Information and Communication Technology
IEEE	Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers
IPTV	Internet Protocol TV

IS	Information Systems
ISP	Internet Service Provider
IT	Information Technology
ITC	Integrated Telecom Company
ITU	International Telecommunication Union
JEC	Jizan Economic City
KACST	King Abdul Aziz for Science and Technology
KAEC	King Abdullah Economic City
KSA	Kingdom of Saudi Arabia
LRC	Learning Resource Center
LTE	Long Term Evolution
MCIT	Ministry of Communications and Information Technology
ME	Middle East
MENA	Middle East and North Africa
MKEC	Madina Knowledge Economic City
MPTT	Ministry of Posts, Telegraph and Telephones
NC	National Culture
NCITP	National Communication and IT Plan
OC	Organizational Culture
P2M	Project and Program Management
PABMEC	Prince Abdulaziz Bin Musaед Economic City

PAJM	Project Management Association of Japan
PC	Personal Computer
PM	Project Management
PMI	Project Management Institute
PMO	Project Management Office
PMP	Project Management Professional
PMBok	Project Management Book of Knowledge
PRINCE2	PRoject IN Controlled Environments 2
PSO	Project Support Office
PSS	Public Services Solutions
SABIC	Saudi Arabia Basic Industries Corporation
SAGIA	Saudi Arabia National Investment Authority
SAMA	Saudi Arabia Monetary Agency
STC	Saudi Telecom Company
UAE	United Arab Emirates
UHF	Ultra High Frequency
UK	United Kingdom
US/A	United States/ of America
VHF	Very High Frequency
VSAT	Very Small Aperture Terminal
WiMax	Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access

WTO                      World Trade Organization

WVS                      World Value Survey

## **ACRONYMS RELATED TO HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS**

IDV                      Individualism

IND                      Indulgence

LTO                      Long-Term Orientation

MAS                      Masculinity

PDI                      Power Distance Index

UAI                      Uncertainty Avoidance



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# CHAPTER ONE: INTRODUCTION

## 1.1 BACKGROUND

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) owes much of the attention it receives globally to its economic prosperity, prompted by the discovery of oil more than 70 years ago. The discovery of oil in the Middle East (ME) started in the early 1930's. Oil was discovered first in Bahrain. There were subsequent oil discoveries in neighbouring countries; KSA, Kuwait, United Arab Emirates and Oman (Owen, 2008). KSA possesses more than 17% of the world's proven oil and gas reserves (CIA, 2014). It produces more than 10 million barrels of crude oil a day and ranks as the largest oil exporter in the world, with oil revenue accounting for more than 80% of KSA's budget revenues (CIA, 2014). As a result, KSA has become one of the wealthiest countries in the world.

In the last two decades the KSA government started developing long-term plans to allow the country to catch up with the rest of the world in terms of development and advancement. In 2013, the KSA government allocated more than \$75 billion for different projects in the public sector, including Information and Communication Technology (ICT) projects. However, ICT projects, in both public and private sectors, are prone to failure and delays all over the world, and this due to many reasons such as poor planning, unclear objectives, unrealistic resources and failure to communicate (Taimour, 2005). In this respect, KSA is no different from other countries and statistics show high rates of failure in such projects. This emphasizes the importance of proper Project Management (PM). Furthermore, there is a widespread anecdotal opinion (with limited academic support, e.g. Loosemore and Al Muslmani, 1999 and Pheng and Alfelor, 2000) that cultural misalignment is a major reason for project failure in KSA.

KSA shares common characteristics with other Arab states: Islamic teachings and Arabic traditions being two important considerations in Muslim countries. Hofstede's (1983) cultural model classified the Arab states, including KSA, as 'collectivistic'. This probably explains the tendency of the Saudi managers prefer to work with employees who share common religion or traditions.

Researchers such as Mellahi et al. (2011) have demonstrated that cultural impact on project management can be observed while working in the Gulf Countries. There has been some work (Hofstede) on classifying 'cultures' thus allowing a basis for commencing the investigation of this aspect.

## **1.2 STATEMENT OF THE PROBLEM**

Spending on ICT projects in KSA has increased significantly in the last decades. KSA has set a state budget of \$228 billion (SR855 billion) for 2014. According to the US-Saudi Forum Annual Report, ICT spending in KSA was expected to reach \$5.7 billion by 2014. The planned ICT projects vary from small to mega projects. The major ICT programs for the Saudi government are in e-government, e-banking, e-commerce and e-learning systems. Designing and executing these programs is becoming a priority for the KSA government.

Around the world, projects fail for many reasons including technical, social, political and cultural. Literature is rich with research on project successes and failures in different industries. For example, the impact of culture on construction projects has been recognized by Flanagan (2002) when he argued that there is a *cultural risk* involved in joint venture projects with organizations in different countries. There is, however, very little literature on the success or failure of ICT projects in KSA. Having successful delivery of the ICT projects implies adopting successful project management tools and techniques.

Even though KSA is witnessing a move towards advancement and development, projects there still fail miserably especially in the Information Technology (IT) industry. In KSA, culture is a very important factor in people's business including the management of projects. For example, during prayer times people are not allowed to walk down the street and businesses are forced to close. Connections and relationships are also very important factors when doing business in KSA. This adds more challenges to conducting business and therefore to guaranteeing successful delivery of projects. Therefore, many projects, in KSA, are delayed or cancelled before completion, and sometimes at early stages of the projects lifecycle, resulting in huge financial losses.



Based on the number of its certified professionals, the Project Management Institute (PMI) is the most populous project management body in the world. By the end of 2013, the number of certified Project Management Professionals (PMP) came close to 550,000 members (PMI, 2014). By the end of 2015 the number exceeded 607,000 (PMI, 2015).

Many researchers have argued that there is an impact of national culture on project management processes. Javier et al. (2008) recognized the multilevel cultural impact on projects. Muriithi et al. (2003) argued that there is a need for specific frameworks that takes into account the regional cultural context. Most of the relevant studies compare two or more different cultures and conclude that cultural differences are responsible for projects delays and possibly for failure as well. Only a very limited number of studies went on to investigate the cultural influence on project management in the ME and particularly in KSA.

### **1.3 AIMS AND OBJECTIVES**

The aim of this research is to contribute to more successful delivery of ICT projects in KSA. There is a commonly-held belief that there are elements of national culture in KSA that impact the implementation of PM processes on ICT projects.

Seven objectives have been designed to support the aim, to test the propositions, to answer the research questions, and to drive this research study. These are to:

1. Consider available systems of PM procedures and select one that best reflects international best practice;
2. Examine available models of cultural dimensions and select the most appropriate for the study;
3. Define KSA national cultural factors using the selected model of cultural dimensions;
4. Propose a theoretical framework that demonstrates the impact of these cultural factors on PM procedures;
5. Test this with data gathered from private and public ICT projects in KSA;
6. Review the findings and their implications for the framework;

7. Advise on how international PM best practice systems might be adapted to be more applicable in the KSA context.

## **1.4 RESEARCH QUESTIONS**

The research questions that emerge are:

1. What, if any, are the elements of KSA national culture that impact the implementation of the PM processes on ICT projects (from the venter's perspective)?
2. How and to what extent do they have their impact?
3. What needs to be done in adapting standard PM approaches to cater for this?

## **1.5 RESEARCH METHODOLOGY**

There are several approaches that can be adopted for this kind of research. The limited availability of research results, on the impact of national culture on the PM practices in KSA context, makes the selection of the case study approach an obvious choice. A case study research approach is designed to study things in their natural settings (Creswell, 2003). Yin (2009) recommends using multiple case study approach, in such research environments. This allows the researcher to compare the findings from multiple projects by conducting a cross-case analysis.

Two methods will be used to collect data for subsequent analysis; semi-structured interviews with participants and collection of projects documentation.

## **1.6 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

This study is conducted to meet the research objectives and to answer the research questions. Therefore, it is expected to benefit the project management theory and practice and to make the application of project management practices and techniques, in KSA, relatively easier. The original contribution to knowledge of this research, based on the aims and objectives, can be divided into two parts:

### ***Contribution to project management theory***

1. Processes identified and explained in the PMI Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBok) guide will be investigated in the light of empirical evidence from ICT projects in KSA. Subsequent analysis will use a framework derived from Hofstede's work on cultural dimensions.
2. Based on the outcomes of the analysis, this research will try to suggest how the PMBoK can be adapted so that it accounts for the cultural context of the KSA.

### ***Contribution to project management practice***

1. Project team members, in KSA, usually come from different countries and regions such as India, Philippines, Pakistan, Sri Lanka, Arab States, America and Europe. It is not uncommon to find a project that has team members from as many as six different countries, and therefore has a variety of cultural backgrounds. Individual cultural background of the individual team members can be very different from the measured national culture of a certain country. Therefore, an early evaluation of the cultural background, based on the theoretical framework, needs to be conducted, and therefore, decisions on employments and assignments are taken as early as possible. This research will result in a deeper understanding of the ICT professionals, in KSA, and their environment which could be extremely helpful for practitioners with different cultures.
2. The intended theoretical framework of this research, which will be based on Hofstede's cultural model, would help ICT professionals in KSA to understand and adapt to the individual cultural profile of individuals within the project team. For example, project managers could benefit from creating reference profiles for their preferred characteristics, thus anticipating difficulties that might appear within a project team as a result of cultural diversity.

## 1.7 OUTLINE OF THESIS

**Chapter One** provides a background to the thesis and introduces the research questions, research aim and objectives. It also presents the research methodology and the possible contribution to knowledge.

**Chapter Two** introduces the first part of the literature review; the research context. It gives a brief overview of Saudi Arabia and explains the geo-political background of the country. It also highlights the importance of religion in the daily life of the Saudi and how it affects business there. The next part of this chapter describes the economy and its role in the development and advancement of KSA. The third part of the chapter explains how the ICT infrastructure is becoming an important element in the development of KSA. It also considers the investment in this sector and highlights current ICT projects. It goes on to explain the policies and regulations of the Saudi Communication and Information Technology Committee (CITC).

**Chapter Three** begins the second part of the literature review, concerned with national culture. It introduces the different definitions of culture and explains the difference between national culture and organizational culture. It also explains the impact of national culture on management in general and on project management in particular. This chapter introduces the different models of culture and concentrate on Hofstede's model, and its application on project management processes in different regions. Finally this chapter compares and contrasts the pros and cons of Hofstede's model.

**Chapter Four** is the third and final part of the literature review; project management and national culture. It begins by defining project management and introducing the standard approaches of project management. This chapter explains the PMI project management model by going through the five process groups; project initiation, planning, execution, monitoring and controlling and closing. It also examines existing literature on the impact of Hofstede's cultural model on project management processes, concentrating on ICT projects in Saudi Arabia.

**Chapter Five** introduces the research design. It justifies the adoption of a qualitative methodology and explains the three different study approaches; the qualitative

interviews, direct observation and case studies. This chapter discusses other research issues like validity and reliability, ethical issues, questionnaire piloting, transcription, computer assisted data analysis and coding. The second part of the chapter introduces the proposed framework and propositions that are derived from it. These are:

*P1:* The subordinates' fear of their superiors is negatively associated with effective communication management

*P2:* The dominance of relationship over tasks is negatively associated with quality management

*P3:* Blindly following instructions by subordinates is positively associated with time and cost management

*P4:* Slow decision-making process is negatively associated with time and cost management

*P5:* Protection of subordinates, by superiors, in return for loyalty, is negatively associated with stakeholder management

*P6:* The attitude that the boss knows it all and has all the answers, is negatively associated with integration management

*P7:* Flexible milestones is negatively associated with time management

*P8:* Pursuit of short-term success is negatively associated with quality management

*P9:* Working long hours is negatively associated with effective risk management

*P10:* Maintaining friendly relationships between workers positively impacts effective communication management

*P11:* Fast adaptation of workers to changing circumstances is positively associated with integration management

*P12:* Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction is negatively associated with efficient human resources management

**Chapter Six** is about results and analysis. It introduces the four case studies in this research. It also introduces the twelve independent variables and the themes arising from the data analysis for both private and public sector projects.

**Chapter Seven** discusses the research findings and their implications, including the influence of Hofstede's cultural dimensions on project management. It also introduces the refined framework based on the new findings. Finally, it discusses the validation of the framework using a data triangulation and review panel approaches.

**Chapter Eight** presents the conclusions. It re-visits the research aim and objectives in detail and assesses the contribution of this research to theory and practice. Finally, it acknowledges the limitations of the research and provides suggestions for future work.

# CHAPTER TWO: THE RESEARCH CONTEXT

## 2.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the context in the KSA, as a cultural region, highlighting the role of religion in shaping the lives of the Saudi citizens. This report also discusses the oil-based KSA economy and government attempts to diversify it. Finally, the report describes the ICT industry in KSA, in terms of industry, service providers, expenditure, infrastructure and projects.

## 2.2 OVERVIEW OF SAUDI ARABIA

KSA is an Arab Muslim country that is located in the ME. According to the 2012 Population Census, the total population is approximately 30 million, including 10 million expatriates. Riyadh is the political and economic capital of the kingdom. The most important cities after Riyadh are the Eastern Province cities of Dammam and Al-Khubar, and the Western Province cities of Mecca and Medina, as shown in Figure 2.1.



Figure 2.1: Map of Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (Source: CIA World Factbook)

KSA is a country that is mainly desert that has access to two seas; the Red Sea in the west and the Persian Gulf in the east. KSA is the largest state in the Gulf Corporation

Council (GCC), and the second largest Arab country after Algeria. The size of the KSA is about 2.2 million km<sup>2</sup>, which is about 8.85 times the size of the United Kingdom (UK).

Even though KSA seems like a very modern country, Saudi society is very conservative, in comparison with other Arab Muslim nations, like Egypt or Syria. The Saudi community is based on tribalism and its culture is controlled by Islamic and Tribal traditions (Rice, 2004).

### **2.2.1 The History of KSA**

KSA is the birthplace of Prophet Mohammed. He was born in Mecca in A.D. 570, in a community, that is described, by Muslims, as 'the time of ignorance', and died in A.D. 632. He created the first Islamic state in Mecca, and from there Islam spread to the rest of the world.

In KSA history the appearance of Al Saud family happened at the same time as that of the Muslim scholar Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab. In 1744, Mohammed bin Abdul Wahhab and Mohammed bin Saud signed a deal and swore an oath to work together to establish a state based on Islamic principles (Library of Congress, 2006). The relationship and the agreement between the two leaders, was based on Abdul Wahhab's 'claim of religious legitimacy' and Saud's willingness to pursue a holy war (jihad) in defence of these principles (Library of Congress, 2006). By 1765, Saud's forces had laid the foundation for his political power, based on what is known later as 'Wahhabism' (Library of Congress, 2006).

KSA was established on 23 September, 1932, by King Abdul Aziz Al Saud, and this date was recently declared as KSA's Independence Day. King Abdul Aziz united the scattered cities and regions, in the Hijaz area, under his family's rule, creating a kingdom that depended heavily on religious support.

### **2.2.2 Tradition and Culture in KSA**

This brief exploration of the cultural context relies heavily the excellent work on the subject by Rice (2004) and the few others, like Abdul Gader (1997) who did similar work. Abdul Gader (1997, p. 4) sees KSA as a country that is politically and



economically important and as a result will need to have its culture respected and appreciated by the multinational businesses that work there. This can be achieved by educating expatriates about the host country's culture prior to accepting the job and to moving to work abroad. IT professionals working in the Gulf States and particularly in KSA, will produce better results when they have better understanding of the host country's culture (Abdul Gader 1997, p. 4).

Saudi nationals have similarities with neighbouring Gulf States; Kuwait, Qatar, Bahrain, United Emirates and Oman. Religion, traditions and tribal background form the basis for these societies. Expatriates form one third of the kingdom's population, making KSA one of the most popular places that attract foreign workers. As a result, Saudi nationals are used to working with multi-national workers.

Rice (2004) believes that the majority of the Saudi citizens prefer to be employed as managers and that this is because they are interested in power, respect and authority in the work place. On the other hand, many companies in KSA prefer to employ expatriates, at all levels, due to their experience and qualifications. The management of multicultural workforce is never easy. Management in such environments needs to pay special attention to leadership, motivation and compensation factors (Rice, 2004).

### **2.2.3 KSA's Political System**

KSA is an absolute monarchy. The kingdom has been under the rule of the Saud dynasty since its foundation. King Salman Bin Abdul Aziz, the current king, also known as 'the Custodian of the Two Holy Mosques', ascended to the throne on 23rd January 2015, after the death of his brother King Abdullah (BBC News, 2015). King Salman, the seventh king of the KSA, has made many important changes since his accession and among Saudis is seen as the godfather of modernization and development.

King Salman issued a number of royal decrees paving the road to his cabinet ministers to advance reforms, in the political, economic and social sectors. The Saudi king is under pressure to pursue real changes that allow for more political freedoms. The 'Arab Spring' opened the eyes and minds of Saudi citizens to the possibility of imitating the scenarios in the neighbouring countries; Egypt, Tunisia, Libya, Yemen and Syria.

In KSA, there are two ruling powers; the 'political' represented by the King and his cabinet of ministers and the 'religious', represented by the clerics. Neither side in this power equation can work without the help of the other. It is an unusual relationship with a fine thread keeping them tied to each other. Both understand that they need each other, otherwise they both lose. Religion and politics have not been separated since the establishment of the state, in 1932, known today as KSA (Niblock, 1982).

KSA has an international reputation for political and economic stability. During the latest global recession, that hit and affected almost every country in the globe, KSA did not seem to suffer the consequences of that recession. The reason for this unshaken economy is the oil and gas that the kingdom is enjoy producing and selling at high prices.

#### **2.2.4 The Role of Religion in KSA**

The relationship between the state and religion in KSA is sensitive and complicated. The kingdom was founded based on a mutual understandings and interests of two unrelated parties; the Al-Saud family and the Wahhabi. The real challenge of the Saudi political leaders is to keep the delicate balance between religious conservatism and development and modernization.

Religion has a direct impact on the daily activities, politics and businesses in KSA (Rice, 2004). The Saudi religious police, who are Wahhabis controlled by the 'Propagation of Good and the Abolition of Evil', patrol the streets five times a day (during prayer times) making sure that no Muslim males are walking down the streets, and businesses are closed. Important events, such as business meetings, are usually interrupted by prayer times. Most Saudis don't schedule meetings or any business activities during prayer times

KSA's importance comes from the fact that it leads the Islamic World by taking the role of the custodian of the two holy places; the Grand Mosque in Mecca and the Prophet Mosque in Madinah (Rice, 2004). These two holy places have a spiritual significance in the Islamic world. Muslims, whether Saudis or non-Saudis perform 'Umrah'; a non-mandatory pilgrimage, performed by Muslims, in Mecca, any time during the year.

Umrah should not be mistaken with 'Hajj'. Hajj is a mandatory pilgrimage that is performed once a life, by Muslims, at a time based on the lunar calendar.

Friday is the weekly holiday in KSA, with Friday prayer performed in the mosques. There are two major holidays during the year; Eid Al-Fitr which is the end of the fasting month (Ramadan), and Eid Al-Adha, which is the end of the pilgrimage (Rice, 2004). Both holidays depend on the Islamic lunar calendar, and therefore the days these occasions are celebrated differ every year.

KSA's law is based on the Islamic teaching (Shari'ah), and all the laws passed by the Council of Ministers must not contradict the teaching of Quran (Rice, 2004). A topical example is the issue of women driving in KSA. Saudi scholars believe that allowing women to drive will open up the door for harassment by men and damage Saudi society and be against the Shari'ah doctrine of respect and protection against harassment that is due to women.

Out of the total population of KSA, the majority are Sunni, with 2 million Shiia concentrated mainly in the Eastern Province. Non-Muslims in different sectors, in the kingdom, and are treated fairly by the KSA government. The KSA government does not allow other worship places, such as churches, to be built, anywhere in the kingdom. Followers of other religions are not allowed to practice their religions in public. Doing so could lead to prison and/or deportation. According to the Islamic law, conversion from Islam to any other religion is considered a crime, and could lead to the death penalty.

The school education system in KSA was designed to be based on Islamic teachings. The primary, intermediate, secondary and even the higher education curriculums are religious-based and are dominated by the study of Islam. The educational system has been criticized for concentrating on teaching religious instructions, rather than teaching modern sciences. According to Al-Salloom (1991, p. 43) 'secondary religious schools replace the science requirements found in the regular secondary curriculum with religious subjects.'

Tourism is a very important sector in the KSA economy, and in particularly 'religious tourism'. The KSA government is spending a significant amount of money on expanding

the 'Ka'ba' area, where pilgrims perform Hajj. Expanding this area means more pilgrims and therefore, more revenue to the KSA economy. Muslims all over the world come to KSA to perform Hajj. During the Hajj season, pilgrims stay in Mecca and the majority of them travel and spend few days in Madinah. An estimated of 8.6 million 'religious tourists' (Hajj and Umrah pilgrims) visited KSA in 2004, spending more than \$6.5 billion (Library of Congress, 2006). Therefore, the Hajj season is another source that contributes to the growth of the KSA economy.

## **2.3 THE SAUDI ARABIAN ECONOMY**

KSA has developed from being a desert kingdom to become one of the richest countries in the region, and this due to exploitation of its huge oil and gas reserves (BBC News, 2014). This wealth has opened the door widely, for the Saudi government, to invest, develop and catch up with the modern world in terms of technology. In the 21st century, KSA has made huge steps towards boosting its economy.

### **2.3.1 The Role of the KSA in the Global Economy**

The KSA oil reserve represents about 20% of the world proven reserves (Gulf base, 2014) and can produce more than 10 million barrels a day (BBC News, 2014). KSA is the world's second largest oil producer after Russia, according to the US Energy Information Administration (2013) who has estimated that, at the beginning of 2013, KSA has about 265 billion barrels of oil reserves, in addition to the 2.5 billion barrels in the Saudi-Kuwaiti shared zone. Based on current oil production, it is estimated that these oil reserves will be sufficient for 90 years (Country Intelligence Report, 2014).

The importance of KSA in the international arena comes from the fact that KSA is a major oil and gas producer, in addition to the role that it plays as the leader of the Muslim and Arab Worlds (BBC News, 2014). KSA is a regional power and is considered an essential brick in the stability of the ME and the Arab World. KSA, as a member of the G20 group of nations, has influence over the world's economic decisions and has a role to play in shaping the face of the future global economy.

Although oil almost 90% of government revenues (AlShahrani & Alsadiq, 2014) KSA also depends on petrochemicals production through state-owned companies like Saudi Arab American Corporation (ARAMCO) and Saudi Arabia Basic Industries Corporation (SABIC). The highest oil production reached 12 million barrels a day in 2009 (US Energy Information Administration, 2013). Rice (2004) argues that the economic diversification, privatization, liberalization of the economy, and the 'Saudization' of the workforce are the most important goals of the KSA government. The intention of the KSA government in the coming years is to try to decrease the dependence on oil and gas, and to move towards other industries such the ICT.

KSA is one of the most rapidly-growing economies in the region (AlShahrani & Alsadiq, 2014). In December, 2005, the KSA joined the World Trade Organization (WTO), became the 149th member (Economy & Infrastructure, 2014). This development gave the KSA products access to the markets all over the world, resulting in more international investments and therefore creates jobs (Economy & Infrastructure, 2014).

### **2.3.2 The KSA Development Plan**

In 1970, the KSA government started the implementation of the first 'five-year development plan'. The purpose of this plan was to achieve better planning, implementation and produce the required economic performance (AlShahrani & Alsadiq, 2014). Furthermore, the plan aimed to diversify the KSA economy and to have alternative resources to boost the idea of becoming an industrial nation.

The KSA 9th Development Plan (2010-2014) concentrated on the development of the human resources. It showed that the KSA government planned to spend half of its budget, between 2010 and 2014, on the development of the human factor, to fill the gap in the human resources sector. It also emphasized on finalizing the execution of the programs of the National Communication and IT Plan (NCITP) (Ministry of Economy and Planning, 2010, p. 1).

### **2.3.3 The 'Saudization' Initiatives**

'Saudization' is an initiative by the KSA government, with a goal of employing Saudi nationals in the public and private sectors. In 1995, the KSA government passed a resolution stating that any company with more than 20 employees is required to employ at least 5% of Saudi nationals. The 5% was raised to 10% in 1999 (Library of Congress, 2006). Not complying with the 'Saudization' initiative could result in having the company's name on the 'black list', which means no business is done with it and no licences and commercial registration issued.

### **2.3.4 The Investment in KSA**

The KSA government ministries and agencies, including the Saudi Arabia National Investment Authority (SAGIA) are encouraging foreign investment. However, doing business and investing in KSA remains always a challenge for non-Saudi businesses. For example, foreign companies pay a tax rate of up to 20%, while Saudi-owned businesses pay 'Zakat', which is only 2.5%; sufficient to comply with the 'Shari'ah'. This unequal treatment made many businesses shift their interest to neighbouring countries, like United Arab Emirates (UAE) and Qatar, looking for what they consider to be fairer treatment.

This evidence strongly contradicts the opinion of Alawi (2012, p. 14) when he argues that between 183 countries, KSA was ranked 11th, and 1st in the Middle East and North Africa (MENA), in terms of ease of doing business. The Saudi legal system is seen as a system that does not provide equal opportunities to non-Saudi businesses investing in the kingdom.

The KSA government has recently made significant efforts in encouraging investments in all sectors, including ICT. Despite the new rules that allow the foreign investments, in KSA, and the guarantee of protection against Saudi nationalization, foreign businesses are still hesitant to enter the KSA market. According to Agil (2013) this is due to government bureaucracy and the feeling of instability in the region. Furthermore, foreign investors expressed concerns with regard to what is allowed and what is not, such as charging and paying of interest, which are prohibited in KSA.

Industries like the ICT is still in its infant stage, and could if planned well, play a more important role in the KSA economy. The KSA government is moving fast towards becoming the hub of the ME, by attracting more investments in the ICT field.

## **2.4 INFORMATION AND COMMUNICATION TECHNOLOGY IN KSA**

ICT is a set of products and services that consist of three basic components; the IT equipment, communications devices and the related software (Al-Malki 2013 p. 2). ICT consists of two segments; the Information Technology (IT) and Communications.

The first use of computers, in KSA, was in the late 1940s, when Saudi ARAMCO used computers to manage its operations during the exploration of the oil in different regions of the kingdom (Al-Maliki 2013, p. 3). Access to computers is becoming easier by the day, as prices are becoming cheaper everywhere, including in KSA. The Saudi citizens' use of the Internet has increased from 5% in 2001 to 41% in 2010 (Al-Malki 2013, p. 4). This significant increase in the number of the Internet users is due to the availability of broadband technology, lower prices of computers, the improved technical knowledge and the increased benefits of the e-services such as e-banking, e-learning, e-commerce and e-government (Al-Malki 2013, p. 4).

### **2.4.1 The ICT Industry**

The establishment of the Ministry of Communications and Information Technology (MCIT), in 1975, and the Communications and Information Technology Commission (CITC), in 2001, reflects the importance of the ICT industry in the national agenda (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2003, p. 6). The role of MCIT is to oversee the communications and information technologies, while the (CITC) supervises and provides the standards and regulation to the ICT sector.

CITC's responsibilities include the regulation of the telecom and IT sectors, as well as the security of networks. For example, CITC has issued 290 licenses in 15 ICT service categories such as fixed lines and mobile, Internet Service Provider (ISP) and Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT) (Alamri 2013, p. 10). King Abdul Aziz City for Science and Technology (KACST) acts as the KSA's science agency, providing laboratory

research to government organizations (Committee of International Trade & UK Trade Investment, 2013, p. 99).

The most important milestones in the ICT industry in KSA, are: (1) the establishment of the Ministry of Posts, Telegraph and Telephones (MPTT) in 1975; (2) the installation and operation of the first fibre optic network, in 1984; (3) the launching of the mobile phone services, in 1995; (4) the launching of Internet services, in 1999; and finally (5) the establishment of the CITC, in 2001 (AlMarwani, 2013, p. 4).

The NCITP, which was approved, in 2007, by the KSA government, contains policies and programs required to develop ICT in a variety of sectors, such as in e-government, e-health, e-commerce and e-learning (AlMarwani, 2013 p. 5).

The KSA government decision to liberalize the telecom sector in 2004 was the real reason for the current boom in the mobile business. The first step that was taken by the government, immediately after the liberalization of the ICT sector, was to award a mobile license to Mobily, breaking the monopoly of Saudi Telecom Company (STC) (Alawi, 2012, p. 3).

The telecom sector in KSA has typically contributed about 2.7% to the Gross Domestic Product (GDP). This is considered low compared to developed countries such as the UK, where the telecom sector contributed about 4.3% (Alawi, 2012, p. 4). There are no clear statistics on the contribution of the IT sector.

#### **2.4.2 The ICT Market**

The ICT industry in KSA is driven by the mobile phone market. In 2012, KSA was in the first place, amongst the Arab countries, in the mobile penetration (Madar Research & Development, 2012).

KSA's telecom industry was privatized in 1998. Privatizing the telecom sector has benefited customers directly as more competitors are trying to attract more customers with additional services and lower prices. Saudi Arabia (along with countries in the region such as UAE) is one of the countries in the region that has upgraded its networks and deployed the 4G technology (Madar Research & Development, 2012). The 4<sup>th</sup>



Generation (4G) technology offers potentially twice the speed that is currently offered. This technology came as a result of freeing more and more of the spectrum from military and security agencies (Committee of International Trade & UK Trade Investment, 2013, p. 98).

The mobile telecom market in KSA is the fastest growing market in the ICT industry. The number of mobile subscriptions came close to 51 million in 2013, increasing from 9.2 million in 2004, and the broadband subscriptions have grown to 2.92 million subscriptions, increasing from 0.03 million in 2004 (Communications & Information Technology Commission, 2014, pp. 1 & 3). The number of mobile broadband subscriptions stands at 14.27 million at the end of 2013, with a penetration rate of 47.6%, and the number of Internet users was 16.5 million with a penetration of 55.1% , at the end of 2013 (Communications & Information Technology Commission 2014, pp. 3 & 4). Broadband penetration is still not as high as in the USA, Canada, Europe or even some of the Gulf States (Committee of International Trade & UK Trade Investment, 2013, p. 97).

Saudi telecom services revenues have showed a significant increase from \$5.3 billion in 2001 to \$20 billion in 2013 (Communications & Information Technology Commission, 2014, pp. 5 & 6). The mobile sector's revenue is approximately 80% of the total telecom sector revenues in Saudi Arabia (Madar Research & Development, 2012).

The International Telecommunication Union (ITU) estimated that there were around 6.8 billion cell phone subscriptions at the end of 2013, which is equivalent to the population of the entire earth (International Telecommunication Union, 2013, p. 1). Most Arabs, and specially Saudis, own more than one cell phone and therefore have more than one subscription. The kingdom is on the edge of a broadband boom with subscribers increasing to 4.4 million between 2005 and 2010, and this due to the demand for smart phones with their penetration increasing from 17% in 2010 to 25% in 2011 (Alawi, 2012, pp. 1 & 9). The penetration of smart phones, in KSA, is expected to reach 44.8% by the end of 2015, with more demands for data services (Alawi, 2012, p. 9).

### **2.4.3 The Telecom Network Operators**

The major mobile operators in the kingdom are the STC, Ettihad Etisalat (Mobily), the Public Telecommunications Company (Bravo) – acquired by STC - and Zain Saudi Arabia, while the fixed network operators are the STC, Integrated Telecom Company (ITC) and Etihad Atheeb Telecommunications Company (GO). STC, Etihad Etisalat (Mobily), and Zain Saudi Arabia have successfully implemented 4G technology. These companies provide fixed and cellular phones, Internet services and Internet Protocol TV (IPTV).

STC, the main and largest telecom provider in KSA, intends to invest \$1 billion over the next couple of years in upgrading its networks and therefore provide better services (Committee for International Trade & UK Trade & Investment, 2013, p. 97). Zain, the second largest telecom provider in KSA has, in 2012, signed an agreement with Vodafone UK to allow Zain to access the Vodafone devices and services (Committee for International Trade & UK Trade & Investment, 2013, p. 98).

The telecom companies in KSA are investing heavily to keep up with the latest technology. They invested 31 billion Saudi Riyals between 2008 and 2011 in upgrading and developing their infrastructure (Alawi, 2012, p. 3). Furthermore, both STC and Mobily are spending 5-5.5 billion Saudi Riyals per year for the next five years in enhancing their telecom networks (Alawi et al., 2013, p. 1). These companies are continuously expanding and improving their broadband services. By the end of 2015 Mobily was set to deliver its broadband services to 500,000 houses and STC was set to deliver to 1.5 million houses (Alawi et al., 2013, p. 1).

### **2.4.4 The ICT Expenditure in KSA**

KSA is one of the countries that has witnessed significant spending on its telecom infrastructure over the years, as the government started to treat this sector as one of the main drivers of the KSA economic development (Committee of International Trade & UK Trade Investment, 2013, p. 97). Telecom and IT products are seen as essentials in improving the daily lives of the Saudis. This is clear from the large number of cell phone, laptops and note pads that the Saudis own, and from the large number of the Internet

subscriptions. Spending on telecom is forecast to reach \$10 billion in 2013 and to increase further to reach \$13 billion by 2015 (Committee of International Trade & UK Trade Investment, 2013, p. 97). Expenditure on IT is reaching \$9.9 billion in 2013 (Committee of International Trade & UK Trade Investment, 2013, p. 97).

According to CITC, the amount of spending on ICT services has increased to SR102 billion in 2013 compared to SR36 billion in 2005 (Communications & Information Technology Commission, 2014, p. 6). CICT predicts that the spending on ICT will go up by 12%, by the end of 2014 (Communications & Information Technology Commission, 2014, p. 6). CITC reports estimate that the contribution of the ICT sector to the GDP, in KSA, is 2.78% (Communications & Information Technology Commission, 2014, p. 8). The ITU appraises that the entire world ICT market, in 2002, was approximately \$2.1 trillion, which is broken down to telecom services of 39%, software and services of 31%, and hardware of 30% (UAnon, ICT Book p. 19).

#### **2.4.5 The ICT Projects in KSA**

The moment the Information Technology (IT) and Communications joined forces and become one powerful tool, the world started to get smaller, as more economical and fast access to information is becoming available (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2003, p. 3).

The whole world is competing extremely fast towards the conversion of its societies to 'knowledge societies', where IT can be used in all aspects of life. The 2.5 quintillion bytes of data which are created every day (The 2nd Saudi International Conference on IT, 2013, p. 2) is a good indication of how serious this world about moving in this direction.

One of the goals of the KSA government is to become a 'knowledge-based economy' (The 2nd Saudi International Conference on IT, 2013, p. 7). This will increase the effectiveness and efficiency in delivering the e-services by the both public and private organizations. The CITC reported that, in 2012, KSA has spent SR94 billion on ICT (The 2nd Saudi International Conference on IT, 2013, p. 7). The Ninth Development Plan (2010-2014) highlights the government's vision in, KSA, for the future of the ICT, in

terms of developments, as it calls for narrowing the technological gap between the KSA and the developed countries by 2020 (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2003, p. 4).

KSA is spending \$70 billion in financing mega projects namely the 'Economic or Smart Cities', which are still under construction. These cities are King Abdullah Economic City (KAEC), Madina Knowledge Economic City (MKEC), Prince Abdulaziz Bin Musaед Economic City (PABMEC), and Jizan Economic City (JEC) (Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group, 2009, p. 1). These cities are designed to develop a knowledge economy, which will provide the youth in KSA with the needed skills for future jobs (Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group, 2009, p. 1). SAGIA estimates that the Smart Cities will boost the GDP, in KSA, with approximately \$150 billion, and bring about 1 million new jobs by 2020 (Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group, 2009, p. 1). The 'Smart Cities' projects are the result of a business partnership between the KSA government and the Cisco Internet Business Solution Groups (Cisco Internet Business Solutions Group, 2009, p. 1). Smart Cities means that the ICT is integrated in every corner of these cities. For example, in 2011, a \$30 billion agreement, between the KSA government and Cisco Systems, was signed to develop an ICT master plan for JEC.

The internet services started, in KSA, in 1998, with very limited speed and access. The internet unit, at KACST, as shown in Figure 2.2, controls the internet gateway, and filters out certain websites. In turn, the STC supply the links between the ISP and the customers (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2003, p. 8).

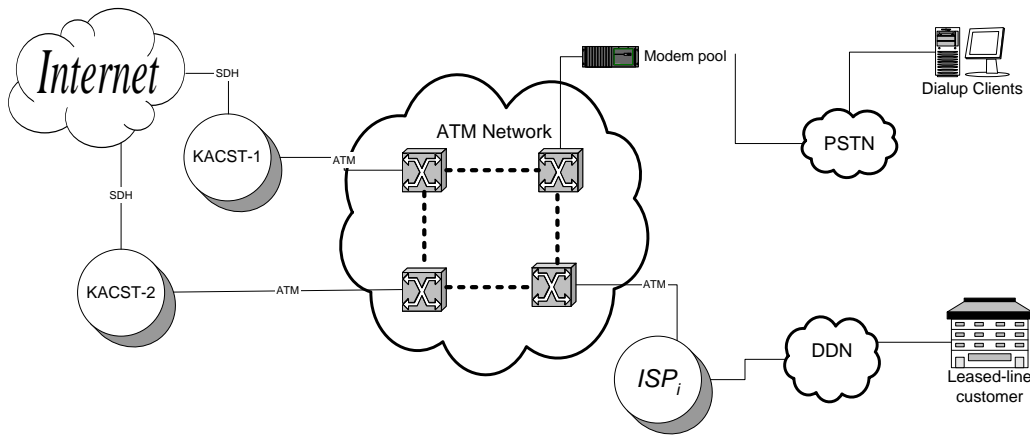


Figure 2.2: Internet infrastructure in Saudi Arabia

One of the major ICT projects in KSA is the Supercomputer 'SANAM', which was built as a result of a joint effort between the KSA, represented by KACST, and Germany, represented by both FIAS at Goethe University and the Helmholtz International Center (The 2nd Saudi International Conference on IT, 2013, p. 8). The SANAM is a very powerful computer built to perform intensive computational operations, and can handle 532.6 trillion operations per second (The 2nd Saudi International Conference on IT, 2013, p. 9).

Plans and initiatives have been launched by the KSA government to apply the ICT technology into different fields, such as education, health, trade and banking. Examples of the launched ICT projects in the education field are: Prince Abdulla Bin Abdul Aziz computer project for students 'Watany', the Learning Resource Center (LRC) and the computer-based labs and project for training high school students in informatics 'Ta'heel' (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2003, p. 12).

The KSA Ministry of Education is emphasizing on benefiting from the ICT capabilities in improving the education for students, especially at the early age. One of the major ICT projects in this regard is 'Watani'. It is a SR5 billion project that will be executed in phases during the coming years, and it aims to have almost all schools, in the Kingdom, connected (Shalaby, 2001, p. 3).

The E-Government initiative 'Yesser', is another major project that was launched in 2003, allowing citizens and expatriates to access the KSA government services (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2003, p. 14). The E-Banking service was launched by the Saudi Arabian Monetary Authority (SAMA), to allow the electronic execution of transactions between banks and between banks and clients (Ministry of Communications and Information Technology, 2003, p. 15).

One of the obstacles that the E-Government program is facing is the absence of a controlling committee to oversee the execution of the project (Sahraoui et al., 2006, p. 9). Sahraoui et al. (2006) argue that the KSA e-government program will face the very same obstacles that slowed down the conventional government services such as the lack of democracy, transparency and accountability, in addition to the bureaucracy (Sahraoui et al., 2006, p. 11).

The KSA telecom projects are moving towards the data telecom side after the saturation has reached in the voice side. Most of the future upgrades and investments in the telecom sector are going in this direction. For example, in 2011, STC has partnered with Nokia Siemens and Huawei and launched its 4G mobile services. In 2012, Zain signed an agreement with Motorola, Ericsson and Huawei to deliver its Long Term Evolution (LTE) services the major cities in the kingdom, while Mobily partnered with Samsung and Huawei to enhance its Worldwide Interoperability for Microwave Access (WiMax) networks (Alawi, 2012, pp. 1 & 2).

### ***Summary of the chapter***

In this chapter the researcher tried to highlight the importance of understanding the background of the research context. Since the study is going to be on ICT professionals in KSA, it is very important for the reader to understand some of KSA's history, tradition and culture, political system, religion, economy, and ICT sector and projects. All of the above are needed to be taken into account when discussing how ICT professionals think and behave, in both private and public sector projects. For example, the clash between the 'Saudization' initiative by the KSA government and what is actually happening on the ground in terms of the preference of most organizations (including

some public organizations) to employ non-Saudis to increase productivity and maintain standards and professionalism. Religion in KSA also seem to impact how a business is run. For example, the holidays and how projects are impacted during Eid Al-Fitr, Eid Al-Adha and during the month of Ramadan.

The chapter has discussed in details the ICT sector in KSA, in terms of its size and importance. The researcher felt that was necessary to give the reader a clearer understanding of the size of the ICT projects that are being or planned to be executed in the near future. The huge size of these projects and expenditures is an indication of the size of the issue with the delays (and in some cases failure) of these projects.

## CHAPTER THREE: THE BASICS OF CULTURE

### 3.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter discusses the fundamentals of culture and highlights the different attempts to define it. It also explains the types of culture and concentrate on the relationship between national culture and global management. This chapter goes on to review the different approaches to researching culture and compares different cultural models. Finally, there is an explanation of why, from those available, Hofstede's model is selected for the purpose of this study.

### 3.2 THE CONCEPT OF CULTURE

'Culture' is a concept that is widely used but is not an easy term to define. In 1952 scholars such as Kroeber and Kluckhohn collected 164 different definitions of culture, according to Spencer-Oatey (2012) and Olie (1995).

One of the first attempts to explain what culture is, was by Tyler (1870, cited in Avruch 1998, p. 6) when he stated that:

*'culture is that complex whole which includes knowledge, belief, art, morals, law, custom, and any other capabilities and habits acquired by man as a member of society'.*

Culture is manmade, approved by others and passed on to the younger generations to learn (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). According to Hofstede (2010) 'culture only exists by comparison'.

Most recently Matsumoto (1996, p. 16) defined culture as:

*'... the set of attitudes, values, beliefs, and behaviors shared by a group of people, but different for each individual, communicated from one generation to the next'.*



Spencer-Oatey (2008, p. 3) has defined culture as:

*‘a fuzzy set of basic assumptions and values, orientations to life, beliefs, policies, procedures and behavioural conventions that are shared by a group of people, and that influence (but do not determine) each member’s behaviour and his/her interpretations of the ‘meaning’ of other people’s behaviour.’*

People often fail to distinguish culture from human nature. The relationship between personality, culture and human nature, as explained by Hofstede (2005), is clarified in Figure 3.1, below. Hofstede (2005, p. 5) argues that ‘*culture* is learned, not inherited’, while ‘*human nature* is inherited in one’s genes’, and is referred to as ‘what all human beings have in common’. *Personality* is the ‘unique personal set of mental programs’ according to Hofstede (2005, p. 6).

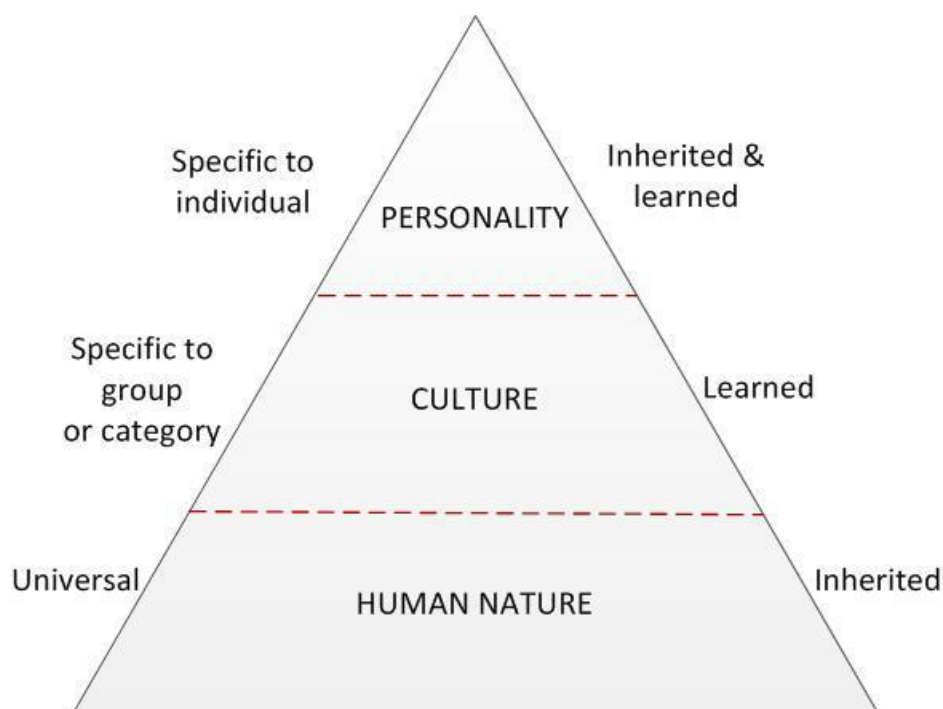


Figure 3.1: Three levels of uniqueness in human mental programming  
(Source: Hofstede (2005, p. 6, cited in Spencer-Oatey, 2012 p. 6)

Culture is a phenomenon that can be observed at different levels, as seen in Figure 3.2: ‘the artefacts, the espoused beliefs and values, and the basic underlying assumptions’

(Schein, 2010 p. 32). The 'artefacts' (described by Schein as easy to observe and difficult to decipher) includes what someone sees, hears and feels when interacting with a different culture (Schein, 2010). These levels are not always obvious. Schoenberger (1997, p. 117) explains that:

*'these categories are hardly ever seen as exclusive. Instead, they may be associated with different layers of social practice and consciousness, some visible and accessible, while others are hidden and, for that reason, thought to be much harder to change'.*

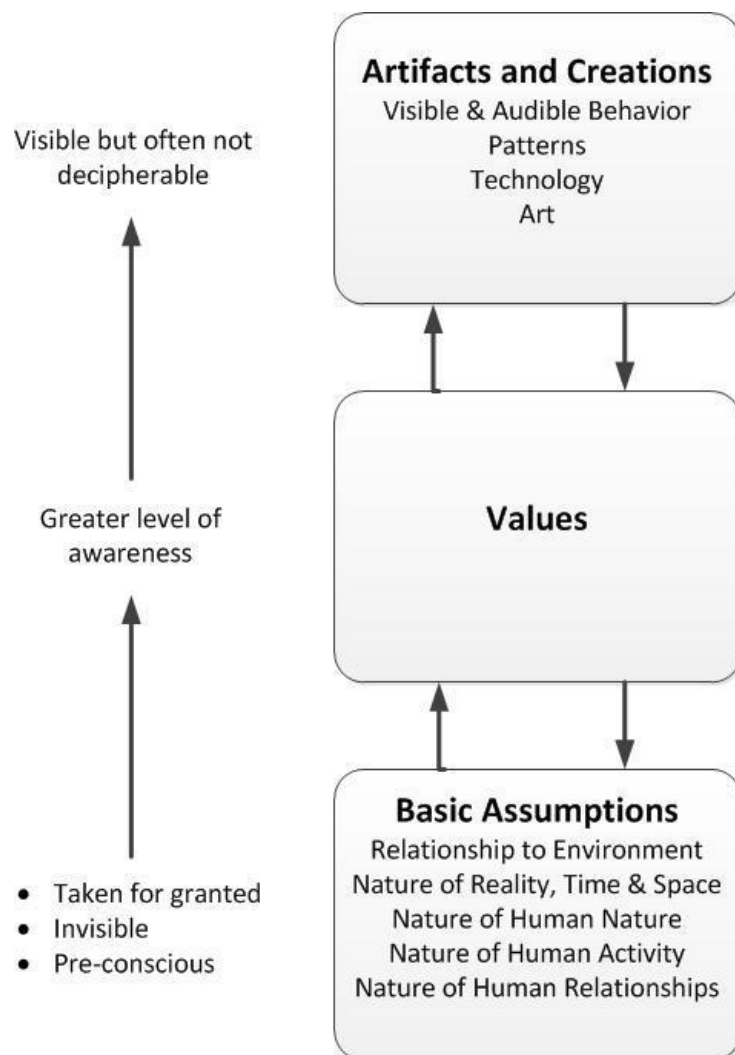


Figure 3.2: The Levels of Culture & their Interaction (Minor adaptation of Schein 1984, 4) (Source: Spencer-Oatey, H. (2012))

Based on Cateora et al. (2008) the five elements of culture are *values*, *rituals*, *symbols*, *beliefs*, and *thought processes*. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997) explain that culture is like an onion that has many layers. The very inside layer (core), which represents the 'values', is usually 'taken for granted'. Hofstede (2005) stated that culture is manifested at four levels of depth, as seen in Figure 3.3, below. On the deepest level we find *values*.

According to Hofstede (2005, p. 7), the manifestation of culture from the shallow to the deep is described by '*symbols* such as words, gesture and pictures', '*heroes* such as alive or dead persons', '*rituals* or collective activities', and '*values*'. These are according to Hofstede (2005) are labelled as practices: they are visible. '*Values*', which represents the core of culture, is mainly about feelings; for example, good versus bad, and these values are usually developed, within children, by the age of 10, according to Hofstede (2005).

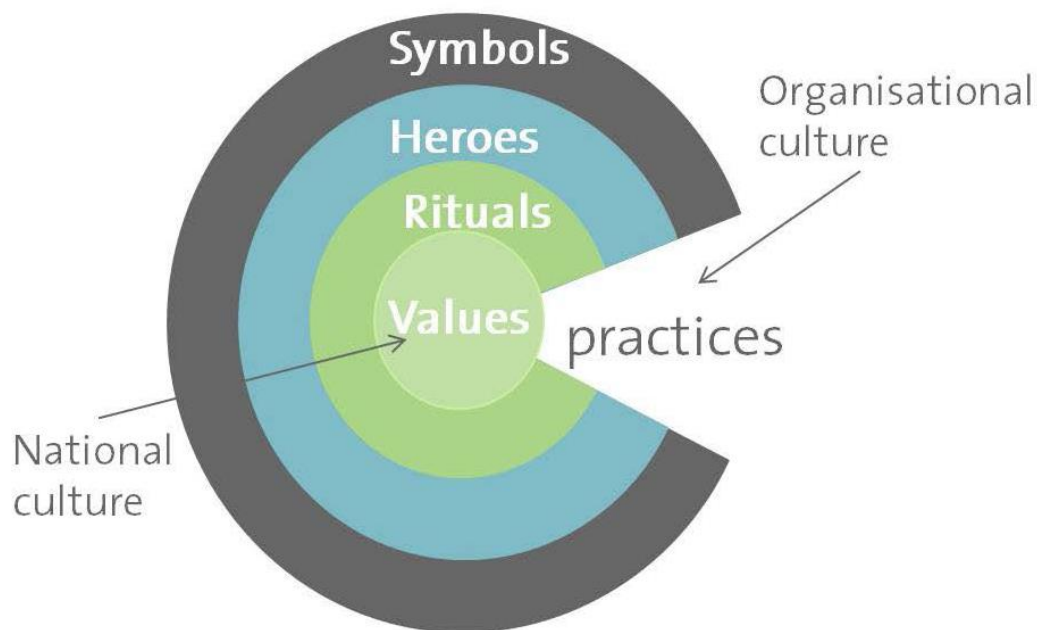


Figure 3.3: The 'onion diagram': manifestations of culture at different levels of depth  
(Source: Hofstede, G. (2005) 'Cultures and organizations: software of the mind', p. 9)

### 3.3 CATEGORIES OF CULTURE

Culture is presented by many researchers at three different categories: *national*, *corporate* and *professional* (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). Schein (2010) defines four different types of culture: 'Macro culture (nations, occupations that exist globally), Organizational Cultures, Subcultures (groups within organizations), and Micro cultures (Microsystems with or within organizations).'

Minkov and Hofstede (2010, p. 14) argue that the concept *culture* has different implications when used in national and organisational contexts. For the purpose of this study, the researcher will concentrate on understanding two types of culture: organizational and national.

#### 3.3.1 Organizational Culture and National Culture

Organizational Culture (OC) was defined by Schein (2004, p. 17) as:

*'a pattern of shared basic assumptions that was learned by a group as it solved its problems of external adaptation and internal integration, that has worked well enough to be considered valid and, therefore, to be taught to new members as the correct way to perceive, think, and feel in relation to those problems'.*

According to Hofstede (1991), Organizational Culture does not represent a one employee artifact, value or assumption but rather that of the group, as a whole, and Cameron (2011) highlights the influence that Organizational Culture has on the performance of an organization.

The concept *national culture* can be misleading as it may refer to a group of people in a certain country, and not necessarily a whole nation. One of the most commonly-used definitions of national culture is:

*'the collective programming of the mind which distinguishes the members of one group or category of people from others'.* (Hofstede, 2011, p. 3)

Hofstede (1991) believed that the basic values of a national culture are usually acquired at the age of ten (at the family, school, and neighbourhood levels) while the organizational culture is gained at a later stage when someone entered the work environment (Minkov and Hofstede, 2010, p. 14).

### **3.4 DIMENSIONAL MODELS OF NATIONAL CULTURE**

Several cross-cultural models were introduced by different scholars recently to try to study the impact of cultural differences on organizational behaviours and management in general. Shi and Wang (2011) and House et al. (2004) listed few cross-cultural models which are used by many researchers and practitioners: Hofstede (1980), Trompenaars (1993), Schwartz & Bilsky (1987) and the Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) in the mid-1990s.

The multi-dimensional models (such as Hofstede's, 1980; Trompenaars', 1997 and GLOBE, 2002) seem to be more broad and suitable for explaining such a complex phenomenon (i.e. national culture). It can be argued that the vast majority of cross-cultural researchers agree that the most popular work on national culture was conducted by Hofstede. For example, Hofstede's publication (1980) '*Cultures and organizations: Software of the mind*' was cited 28,695 times, while the work of Trompenaars (1997) '*riding the waves of culture*' and House et al., (2004) '*Culture, leadership, and organizations: The GLOBE study of 62 cultures*' were cited 8,086 times and 5,572 times, respectively. A more comprehensive review of these multi-dimensional models will be discussed in the later sections of this chapter, with a concentrating on the Hofstede's model.

#### **3.4.1 Hofstede's Model**

According to Hofstede (1981), his research took place for the first time in 1967 and was repeated in 1973, conducted on 40 different nationalities, resulting in a data base of 116,000 questionnaires (Shi and Wang, 2011, p. 94). The outcome of Hofstede's (1980)

work was a model with four dimensions: Power Distance (PDI), Individualism (IDV), Masculinity (MAS), and Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI) (as seen in Appendix 3).

The fifth dimension, Long-Term Orientation (LTO) (originally called ‘Confucian Work Dynamism’), which was produced as a result of a joint study between Hofstede and the Canadian psychologist Michael Harris Bond, was added in 1991 (see Minkov & Hofstede, 2010, p. 8). A sixth dimension was added to the already existing 5-dimensional framework. The sixth dimension: Indulgence vs. Restraint (IND) was added in 2001 as a result of a joint work between Hofstede and Bulgarian scholar Michael Minkov. Table 3.1 shows the details definitions of Hofstede's six cultural dimensions. It should be noted that Hofstede's cultural elements cover the whole spectrum of human activities (education, family, etc.) but for the purpose of this study the researcher has selected the cultural elements that are directly related to business and to project management, in particular (as highlighted in bold italic, in Table 3.1, below).

Hofstede (1980) argues that culture consists of a group of people who lived similar life experiences and went through similar education. He also believes that culture is very difficult to change, and if it ever does, it happens slowly (Hofstede, 1980). The programming process of the mind begins at the family during the childhood, and continues to include the stages school, neighbourhood, work place and in the whole community (Hofstede, 2005).

<b>Small Power Distance</b>	<b>Large Power Distance</b>
Use of power should be legitimate and is subject to criteria of good and evil	Power is a basic fact of society antedating good or evil: its legitimacy is irrelevant
Parents treat children as equals	Parents teach children obedience
Older people are neither respected nor feared	<b><i>Older people are both respected and feared</i></b>
Student-centered education	Teacher-centered education
Hierarchy means inequality of roles, established for convenience	<b><i>Hierarchy means existential inequality</i></b>
Subordinates expect to be consulted	<b><i>Subordinates expect to be told what to do</i></b>
Pluralist governments based on majority vote and	Autocratic governments based on co-optation and

changed peacefully	changed by revolution
Corruption rare; scandals end political careers	Corruption frequent; scandals are covered up
Income distribution in society rather even	Income distribution in society very uneven
Religions stressing equality of believers	Religions with a hierarchy of priests
<b>Weak Uncertainty Avoidance</b>	<b>Strong Uncertainty Avoidance</b>
The uncertainty inherent in life is accepted and each day is taken as it comes	The uncertainty inherent in life is felt as a continuous threat that must be fought
Ease, lower stress, self-control, low anxiety	Higher stress, emotionality, anxiety, neuroticism
Higher scores on subjective health and wellbeing	Lower scores on subjective health and well-being
Tolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is curious	<b><i>Intolerance of deviant persons and ideas: what is different is dangerous</i></b>
Comfortable with ambiguity and chaos	<b><i>Need for clarity and structure</i></b>
Teachers may say 'I don't know'	<b><i>Teachers supposed to have all the answers</i></b>
Changing jobs no problem	<b><i>Staying in jobs even if disliked</i></b>
Dislike of rules - written or unwritten	Emotional need for rules – even if not obeyed
In politics, citizens feel and are seen as competent towards authorities	In politics, citizens feel and are seen as incompetent towards authorities
In religion, philosophy and science: relativism and empiricism	In religion, philosophy and science: belief in ultimate truths and grand theories
<b>Individualism</b>	<b>Collectivism</b>
Everyone is supposed to take care of him- or herself and his or her immediate family only	<b><i>People are born into extended families or clans which protect them in exchange for loyalty</i></b>
"I" – consciousness	"We" –consciousness
Right of privacy	Stress on belonging
Speaking one's mind is healthy	Harmony should always be maintained

Others classified as individuals	Others classified as in-group or out-group
Personal opinion expected: one person one vote	Opinions and votes predetermined by in-group
Transgression of norms leads to guilt feelings	Transgression of norms leads to shame feelings
Languages in which the word "I" is indispensable	Languages in which the word "I" is avoided
Purpose of education is learning how to learn	Purpose of education is learning how to do
Task prevails over relationship	<b><i>Relationship prevails over task</i></b>
<b>Femininity</b>	<b>Masculinity</b>
Minimum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders	Maximum emotional and social role differentiation between the genders
Men and women should be modest and caring	Men should be and women may be assertive and ambitious
Balance between family and work	<b><i>Work prevails over family</i></b>
Sympathy for the weak	<b><i>Admiration for the strong</i></b>
Both fathers and mothers deal with facts and feelings	Fathers deal with facts, mothers with feelings
Both boys and girls may cry but neither should fight	Girls cry, boys don't; boys should fight back, girls shouldn't fight
Mothers decide on number of children	Fathers decide on family size
Many women in elected political positions	Few women in elected political positions
Religion focuses on fellow human beings	<b><i>Religion focuses on God or gods</i></b>
Matter-of-fact attitudes about sexuality; sex is a way of relating	Moralistic attitudes about sexuality; sex is a way of performing
<b>Short-Term Orientation</b>	<b>Long-Term Orientation</b>
Most important events in life occurred in the past or take place now	Most important events in life will occur in the future
Personal steadiness and stability: a good person is always the same	<b><i>A good person adapts to the circumstances</i></b>
There are universal guidelines about what is good and evil	What is good and evil depends upon the



	circumstances
Traditions are sacrosanct Traditions are adaptable to changed circumstances	Traditions are adaptable to changed circumstances
Family life guided by imperatives	Family life guided by shared tasks
Supposed to be proud of one's country	Trying to learn from other countries
Service to others is an important goal Thrift and perseverance are important goals	Thrift and perseverance are important goals
Social spending and consumption	Large savings quote, funds available for investment
Students attribute success and failure to luck	Students attribute success to effort and failure to lack of effort
Slow or no economic growth of poor countries	Fast economic growth of countries up till a level of prosperity
<b>Indulgence</b>	<b>Restrained</b>
Higher percentage of people declaring themselves very happy	Fewer very happy people
A perception of personal life control	<b><i>A perception of helplessness: what happens to me is not my own doing</i></b>
Freedom of speech seen as important	Freedom of speech is not a primary concern
Higher importance of leisure	<b><i>Lower importance of leisure</i></b>
More likely to remember positive emotions	Less likely to remember positive emotions
In countries with educated populations, higher birth rates	In countries with educated populations, lower birthrates
More people actively involved in sports	<b><i>Fewer people actively involved in sports</i></b>
In countries with enough food, higher percentages of obese people	In countries with enough food, fewer obese people
In wealthy countries, lenient sexual norms	In wealthy countries, stricter sexual norms
Maintaining order in the nation is not given a high priority	Higher number of police officers per 100,000 population

Table 3.1: Summary of Hofstede's Cultural Dimensions (Source: Hofstede, G. [2011, p. 9-16].

#### **3.4.1.1 Critiques of Hofstede's Model**

All cultural models have been criticised by scholars and researchers at some time (Reis et al. 2011) and Hofstede's cultural model has been no exception. For example, Cary and Mallory (1998, p. 57) claimed that Hofstede's work is 'vague and contradictory'. Furthermore, Smith (2002) stated that Hofstede has been criticised for building his cultural model on 'time-worn data' gathered through questionnaires conducted in 1968 and for conducting his research on one multinational company.

McSweeney (2002, cited in Williamson, 2002, p. 1373) has criticised Hofstede's cultural model and described it as 'implausible'. Williamson (2002 p. 1374) stated that McSweeney's main critique was on Hofstede's 'methodology: the choice and justification of research methods'.

McSweeney claims that Hofstede's cultural model was founded based on five assumptions, and he described these assumptions as 'flawed', and therefore his model should not be accepted. He also claims that Hofstede made certain assumptions in order to get his results. For example, he believes that Hofstede assumed that national, organizational and occupational cultures are distinguished from each other.

One of the main criticisms that Hofstede is facing was described as 'generalizability': Hofstede has relied on one multinational organization on getting his results and therefore, his framework (Obeidat et al., 2012, p. 516). In fact, McSweeney (2002) and Smith (1992) argue that Hofstede's cross-cultural model might have been biased by the fact that Hofstede's career, at the time he conducted his research at the marketing department at IBM, has affected his results, and therefore produced a sub-cultural, rather than a cultural framework. McSweeney (2002) and Merker (1982) also noted that the IBM employees who responded to his questionnaires were mostly males, and this inevitably affected the results.

Triandis (1988) criticized the method Hofstede used. He suggested that using a single method to collect data was not enough and he suggested using multi-method in order to get more accurate results. Triandis (1988) believes that certain dimensions in

Hofstede's model can be combined into a single dimension. For example, Confucian and Individualism should be treated as a single dimension. This argument was supported by Yeh and Lawrence (1995).

Fang (2003, p. 362) has criticised the 5th dimension arguing that the 'Chinese Ying Yang principle is violated by the concept'. He also added that:

*'there is much redundancy among the 40 Chinese values; a number of values either mean the same thing or highly interrelated'.*

Finally, 'this dimension is based on the opinions of a student population which does not represent all sectors of that culture'.

However, despite these criticisms and arguments against his cultural model, Hofstede's work has influenced business and management all over the world (Shi and Wang, 2011).

### **3.4.2 Trompenaars' Model**

In *Riding the Waves of Culture*, Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1993), argue that internationalisation will lead to a global culture, and in result, will make the lives of international managers much easier. Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner have introduced a new model which consists of 'Seven Dimensions of Culture', based on 30,000 survey results gathered over a period of multiple researches in 28 countries (Gutterman, 2010). The seven dimensions are:

*'Universalism vs. Particularism, Individualism vs. Collectivism, Achievement vs. Ascription, Neutral vs. Affective, Specific vs. Diffuse, Internal vs. External, and Time Orientation'.* (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1993).

Hofstede (1996, p. 195) accused Trompenaars of borrowing his first five dimensions from Talcott Parsons and Edward Shils (1951) and the last two from Kluckhohn and Strodtbeck (1961). For example, Trompenaars' 'Individualism versus collectivism' was

named by Parsons as 'Self-orientation versus collectivity-orientation' (Hofstede, 1996, p. 196). Hofstede (1996, p. 189) criticised Trompenaars model of national culture arguing that the theory he based his work on was not supported by the data and described the work as a 'fast food approach'.

### **3.4.3 The GLOBE Model**

The Global Leadership and Organizational Behaviour Effectiveness (GLOBE) cross-cultural research was conducted between 1994 and 1997, by a group of researchers, on 17,000 participants in 951 organizations distributed in 62 different societies around the world. The GLOBE research resulted in nine dimensions are:

*'Uncertainty Avoidance, Power Distance, Institutional Collectivism, In-Group Collectivism, Gender Egalitarianism, Assertiveness, Future Orientation, Performance Orientation, and Humane Orientation'.* (Shi and Wang, 2011, p. 95)

The GLOBE model has received some criticism, but less than that received by Hofstede's model, possibly because it is a relatively new cultural study; not enough validation and testing has been conducted on it (Shi and Wang, 2011). Hofstede (2010) is convinced that GLOBE used his 'dimensions paradigm' of cross culture, as a base and has 'expanded his five dimensions to nine'. 'Power Distance' and 'Uncertainty Avoidance' were kept by GLOBE, while 'Long Term Orientation' was changed to 'Future Orientation' (Shi and Wang, 2011, p. 95). House et al. (2002) argued that six cultural dimensions in GLOBE were originated by Hofstede's 1980 work.

### **3.5 COMPARISON BETWEEN DIMENSIONAL MODELS**

The similarities and variations between Hofstede and GLOBE models are related to the way the questions were asked and their sequence (Oyserman et al., 2002, cited in Evans, 2013). Even though 'Power Distance' and 'Uncertainty Avoidance' dimensions are named the same in Hofstede's and GLOBE's models, they don't measure the same values (Evans, 2013, p. 2). For the purpose of this research, a comparison is made between Hofstede's, Globe and Trompenaar's models, as seen in Table 3.2, below.

Cultural Model	Dimensions	Meaning
<b>Hofstede</b>  (Source: Hofstede,2010)	1.Power Distance	<i>'The extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions (like the family) accept and expect that power is distributed unequally'</i>
	2.Individualism/Collectivism	<i>'Individualism on the one side versus its opposite, collectivism, is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups'</i>
	3. Masculinity/Femininity	<i>'Masculinity versus its opposite, femininity, refers to the distribution of emotional roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found'</i>
	4.Uncertainty Avoidance	<i>'Indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations'</i>
	5.Long/Short-term Orientation	<i>'Long term orientation cultures value virtues oriented toward future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift. Short term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular respect for tradition, preservation of 'face' and fulfilling social obligations'</i>
	6. Indulgence/Restraint	<i>'Indulgence stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms'</i>

<b>GLOBE</b>  (Source: Deresky, 2011, p.110)	1.Power Distance	<i>'The degree to which members of a collective expect power to be distributed equally'</i>
	2.Uncertainty Avoidance	<i>'The extent to which a society, organization, or group relies on social norms, rules, and procedures to alleviate unpredictability of future events'</i>
	3.Humane Orientation	<i>'The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards individuals for being fair, altruistic, generous, caring, and kind to others'</i>
	4.Collectivism I: (Institutional)	<i>'The degree to which organizational and societal institutional practices encourage and reward collective distribution of resources and collective action'</i>
	5.Collectivism II: (In-Group)	<i>'The degree to which individuals express pride, loyalty, and cohesiveness in their organizations or families'</i>
	6.Assertiveness	<i>'The degree to which individuals are assertive, confrontational, and aggressive in their relationships with others'</i>
	7.Gender Egalitarianism	<i>'The degree to which a collective minimizes gender inequality'</i>
	8.Future Orientation	<i>'The extent to which individuals engage in future-oriented behaviors such as delaying gratification, planning, and investing in the future'</i>
	9.Performance Orientation	<i>'The degree to which a collective encourages and rewards group members for performance'</i>

		<i>improvement and excellence'</i>
<b>Trompenaars</b>  (Source: (Gttermann, 2010, p.1-4).	1.Universalism/Particularism	<i>'distinguishes societies based on the relative importance they place on rules and laws as opposed to personal relationships'</i>
	2.Individualism/Collectivism	<i>'distinguishes societies based on the relative weight given to individual versus group interests'</i>
	3.Achievement/Ascription	<i>'distinguishes societies on the basis of how they distribute status and authority and is quite similar to Hofstede's power distance dimension'</i>
	4.Neutral/Affective	<i>'distinguishes societies based on how they view the display of emotions by their members'</i>
	5.Specific/Diffuse	<i>'distinguishes societies based on how their members engage colleagues in specific or multiple areas of their lives'</i>
	6.Internal/External	<i>'distinguishes societies on the degree to which members believe they can exert control over their environment as opposed to believing that their environment controls them'</i>
	7.Time Oriented	<i>'Sequential/Synchronic distinguishes societies based on whether members prefer to do one thing at a time or work on several things at the same time'</i>

Table 3.2: Summary of the 3 most popular, most cited, cross-cultural frameworks

### **3.6 REASONS FOR CHOOSING HOFSTEDE'S MODEL FOR THIS RESEARCH**

Although, as has been shown, Hofstede's work was criticised by some academics, his work gained the support of many others. For example, Bhagat and McQuaid (1982) believe that Hofstede's work is the most important in the field of cross-cultural research.

Minkov and Hofstede (2010, p. 11) claim that Hofstede is 'one of the most cited authors in social science'. Hofstede's first publication was in 1980: *Culture's Consequences: International Differences in Work-Related Values*. It was reprinted in 1984. In 1991, Hofstede published his book: *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind*. The 2nd edition of *Cultural Consequences* (2001) was written by Hofstede to defend his work against 20 years of criticism. It was followed by his 2005 co-publication with Minkov: *Cultures and Organizations: Software of the Mind* (Minkov and Hofstede, 2010, p. 14).

Pro-Hofstede researchers, like Søndergaard (1994), regard him as a pioneer in the cross-cultural research whose model has helped and guided many businesses in the international market. Jones (2007, p. 6) cites Søndergaard's (1994) study that found that Hofstede 1980 had received 1,036 citations, while other researchers like Miles and Snow received only 200 citations.

Although McSweeney (2000) criticised Hofstede's work by describing it as being 'flawed, sparse and unevenly distributed', Søndergaard (1994) believes that the framework was based on careful design and 'systematic data collection' (Jones, 2007, p. 6). In fact, Jones (2007, p. 6) indicated that Søndergaard (1994) compared the replications of Hofstede's work and found that most of the 61 replications tested have confirmed Hofstede's findings.

### **3.7 ARAB CULTURE IN HOFSTEDE'S MODEL**

Hofstede (1980) included six Arab nations (*Egypt, Iraq, Kuwait, Libya, UAE and Lebanon*) in his original cross-cultural studies. In Hofstede (1991), Saudi Arabia was added raising the number of Arab nations to seven. Saudi Arabia was not included in



his study as an 'individual' nation (Cassell and Blake, 2012). Despite that, he generalized his findings on all Arab speaking nations including Saudi Arabia. Other researchers, such as Ali and Wahabi (1995) also disagree with Hofstede and they believe that Arab countries need to be categorized separately. In fact, Al-Nashmi and Syd Zin (2011) recommended that Hofstede should have divided the Arab nations into separate regions based on 'cultural proximity'. For example:

*'Yemen, Iraq, and all the Arab Gulf countries as one territory; Syria, Lebanon, Jordan, and Palestine as another one; Egypt as a separate territory; Arab West as a territory; and Sudan, Djibouti, and Somalia as a separate territory'.* (Al-Nashmi and Syd Zin, 2011, p. 77).

Obeidat et al. (2012) believes that one of the reasons as why Arab nations scored high on Power Distance is that decisions in the Arab World are made based on favours and not on competency, and that explains why loyalty to superiors is a key issue. For Arab nations, Uncertainty Avoidance is affected by religion, according to Parnell and Hatem (1999, cited in Obeidat et al., 2012). Arab nations scored low on Uncertainty Avoidance, and this is due to the fact that Muslims believe that God is in full control of everything and that time is in God's hand (Herbig and Dunphy, 1998). According to Hofstede (1980), Arab nations scored low on the Individualist/Collectivist index, demonstrating that these nations are collectivists. Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) argue that Arab nations are considered closer to the feminine side as they seem to care about establishing and maintaining friendly relationships with the others, and that explains their moderate score on Masculinity/Femininity index.

Arab traditions and Islamic teaching are the two dominant factors forming the cultural environment in Saudi Arabia (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993). About forty years ago Saudi Arabia was not widely known in the outside world. According to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993, p. 30), the oil crises in the 1970s have opened the Western world's eyes to countries like KSA. After people started to know more about this country, it began to be described as *strange* and *different* (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993, p. 30)

Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993, p. 31) note that Saudi Arabia scores 73 on the power distance index, which places it at the high end of the index, above other Muslim countries such as Turkey, 66; Iran, 58; and Pakistan, 55, based on Hofstede's research.

This high power distance goes with Islamic teaching and Arab tradition. High power distance is an indication that the Saudi society recognizes and accepts the 'high level of inequality of power and wealth in the society' (Hofstede, 1980). According to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993), Saudi managers' high score on 'power distance' is an indication of the social gap between superiors and subordinates. Saudi society expects and accepts that managers or group leaders distinguish themselves from the rest (Hofstede, 1980). This is an accepted behaviour in Saudi and it does not cross anybody's mind to question it or challenge it as it is an inherited culture. Islamic teachings and Arab traditions acknowledge and accept 'authority and status hierarchy' (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993).

In fact, Islamic teaching and Arab tradition strongly encourage superiors to consult with subordinates, but in most cases this does not happen. Islamic teachings encourage superiors to consult with their subordinates. For example, Aaya 38 from Surah Al-Shura, in the Holy Quran states:

وَالَّذِينَ اسْتَجَابُوا لِرَبِّهِمْ وَأَقَامُوا الصَّلَاةَ وَأَمْرُهُمْ شُورَى بَيْنَهُمْ وَمِمَّا رَزَقْنَاهُمْ يُنفِقُونَ

This Aaya translates to:

*'...And those who answer the call of their Lord, and perform As-Salat, and who (conduct) their affairs by mutual consultation, and who spend of what We have bestowed on them;...'. (Aayah 38, Surah Al-Shura, Holy Quran)*

Hofstede (1984) argues that in countries with higher power distance, such as KSA, subordinates depend heavily on their superiors. In fact, Saudi managers prefer to make decisions 'autocratically and paternalistically' (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993, p. 31). The reason for this is that Saudi managers don't separate business from non-business relationships and that explains the reason for consulting with relatives and friends on

business matters (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993). According to Muna (1980) 'joint decision making' is not a preferred policy for Arab managers, in their organizations.

Harris and Morgan (1987, p. 37) made a comparison between managers in three different countries; United States of America (USA), KSA and Japan. The study argues that American manager is described as a 'rational decision maker' and the Japanese manager is described as a 'facilitator'. Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993, p. 31) adds to that by describing the Saudi manager as a 'father figure'.

Hofstede (1980), of the 40 nations in his study, revealed that the USA is the most individualistic nation, while Venezuela is the most collectivistic. Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993, p. 33), argues that Saudi Arabia scored 41, which makes it more of a collectivistic than individualist. Arabs are known for being gregarious: they tend to live in groups according to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993). Saudis are no different, as they live in a society where families and friends play an important role in the activities of the organizations and groups. When Arab men meet other men, they introduce themselves by linking themselves to tribes and groups that they are part of. By contrast, Westerners introduce themselves by mentioning their jobs and what they do for living (Muna, 1980).

Collectivism is a very important concept in the lives of Muslims. Islam teaches its followers to stay close and co-operate with other Muslims and to be there for their happiness and sadness (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993). Non-Muslims, whether living in Muslim societies or even outside these societies, have a share of this fair treatment: Muslims are obliged to treat non-Muslims fairly and to give them their rights (Maududi, 1967).

Masculinity/Femininity refers to the 'dominant sex-role pattern in the majority of both traditional and modern societies: that of male assertiveness and female nurturing' (Hofstede, 1984, p. 19). The Saudi Arabian score was 43; thus slightly more on the 'feminine' than 'masculine' side (Hofstede, 1980)

Arab nations were not classified on the Hofstede's Long Term Orientation (LTO) index, but, according to Obeidat et al., (2012), they can be classified as having LTO, based on the fact that Arab nations believe in reducing Uncertainty Avoidance by long term planning.

Based on Hofstede (1991, cited in Obeidat et al., 2012, p. 517), Arab nations, as a group, have 'large power distance, relatively strong uncertainty avoidance, high collectivism, and moderate masculinity/femininity'.

# CHAPTER FOUR: PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND NATIONAL CULTURE

## 4.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter introduces the concepts of *project* and *project management*. It also explains the industry standards of project management, in particular the PMI project management model and its process groups. Finally, it highlights the relevant literature on the effect of national culture on project management, based on Hofstede's (2011) cultural model.

## 4.2 DEFINITION OF PROJECT

Definitions of *project* tend to vary depending on the academic and professional background of their authors. For example, Abbasi & Al-Mharmah (2000) defined project as:

*‘the art and science of planning, designing and managing work throughout all the phases of the project life cycle’.*

According to the British Standard Institute, a project is:

*‘a unique set of coordinated activities, with defined starting and finishing points, undertaken by an individual or organization to meet specific objectives with defined schedule, cost and performance parameters’.*

Turner (1999) stated that:

*‘a project is an endeavour in which human, financial and material resources are organized in a novel way to undertake a unique scope of work, of given specification, within constraints of cost and time, so as to achieve beneficial change defined by quantitative and qualitative objectives’.*

Perhaps the most commonly cited definition of project is given by the PMBoK guide (PMBoK, 2008, p. 5) as:

*‘a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a unique product, service, or result’.*

All of the scholars who attempted to define project agree on the fact that a project is temporary (it has a start and end) has a specific set of goals, has interrelated activities and a limited budget, regardless of its size and scope.

The generic nature of the PMBoK framework is used to manage different types of projects in many countries around the world. However, Dvir et al. (1998) have demonstrated that the logical approach, that treats all projects as one type, may not be the most effective for managing projects, and that different management styles are needed for different types of projects (Dvir et al., 1998).

In terms of success, Munns and Bjeirmi (1996) argue that a distinction should be drawn between the project and its management, i.e. a difference between *project success* and *project management success*. In fact, they are not directly correlated; a project may be considered a success despite the failure of its project management.

#### **4.3 PROJECT MANAGEMENT**

Projects failure can occur for a variety of reasons: one of which is deficiencies in Project Management (PM). Munns and Bjeirmi (1996, p. 81) have defined project management simply as ‘the process of controlling the achievement of the project objectives’. PMBoK (2008, p. 6) defines PM as:

*‘the application of knowledge, skills, tools and techniques to project activities to meet the project requirements’.*

According to Stuckenbruck and Zomorrodian (1987), PM is:

*'is an innovative management practice that tends to achieve stated or specified objectives within specific time and budget limits through optimum use of resources'.*

Projects are undertaken in almost all kinds of businesses, making them a necessity for all innovations, though some industries are particularly project intensive: for example, defence, construction and information technology.

Avots (1969, cited in Munns and Bjeirmi, 1996) argued that project management is more efficient than traditional ways of management. Organizational structures vary from functional to matrix to 'projectized': the differences between them being related to project manager role and authority, available resources, and control over budget (PMBok, 2008). Managing projects in a 'matrix form' is more efficient and practical than doing it through a 'functional' organizational set up. 'Projectized' organizations give the project manager full authority, control, and responsibility over his or her project. It also makes resources available during the life cycle of the project. Many companies prefer the matrix organization set up, as it is a mix between the functional and 'projectized'.

Avots (1969, cited in Munns and Bjeirmi, 1996) argued that the factors that may cause a project management failure are: inadequate basis for project, wrong person as project manager, top management unsupportive, inadequately defined tasks, lack of project management techniques, management techniques misused, project closedown not planned, and lack of commitment to project. Munns and Bjeirmi (1996, p. 86) argue that:

*'successful project management techniques will contribute to the achievement of projects, but project management will not stop a project from failing to succeed'.*

#### **4.3.1 ICT Project Management**

The focus of this study is ICT projects. This kind of project involves one additional feature, namely *technology*. For a project manager, managing a project implies

managing the people, the process and the technology associated with the project. Technology forms an essential part of ICT projects, making them risky. The more sophisticated the technology used in these projects the more complex they become, making them more susceptible to failure than to success, if the right project management approach is not adopted. ICT projects share some similarities with traditional projects for example: project life cycle and phases.

Most studies agree on the fact that IT projects seem to fail at an alarming rate. For example, on a study conducted on IT projects over a time interval of 16 years, and based on the Standish Group Report, it was found that 29% are successful, 24% fail and around 47% are 'challenged' (Altahtoo and Emsley 2013, p. 366, cited in Eveleens and Verhoef, 2009).

#### **4.4 PROJECT MANAGEMENT STANDARDS**

Project management standards are used by many academics and practitioners in the field of project management. The most popular PM standards are the Project Management Institute (PMI) model, the Project IN Controlled Environments 2 (PRINCE2) model, and the Project and Program Management Enterprise Innovation (P2M) model, founded in the USA, UK, and Japan, respectively. An overview of each of these models will follow, however, for the purposes of this study, the researcher will concentrate on the PMI model.

##### **4.4.1 The (PMI) Model**

The American-based Project Management Institute (PMI) was founded in 1969, with the intention of serving the project management industry (Matos and Lopes, 2013). It published its first Project Management Book of Knowledge (PMBok) in 1987, followed by other editions in 1996, 2000, 2008 and 2013. The PMBoK guide is recognized by the American National Standard Institute (ANSI) and by the Institute of Electrical and Electronics Engineers (IEEE). PMI started the Project Management Professional (PMP) certification in 1984. Prior to 1997 PMP certification was targeted at North America, but

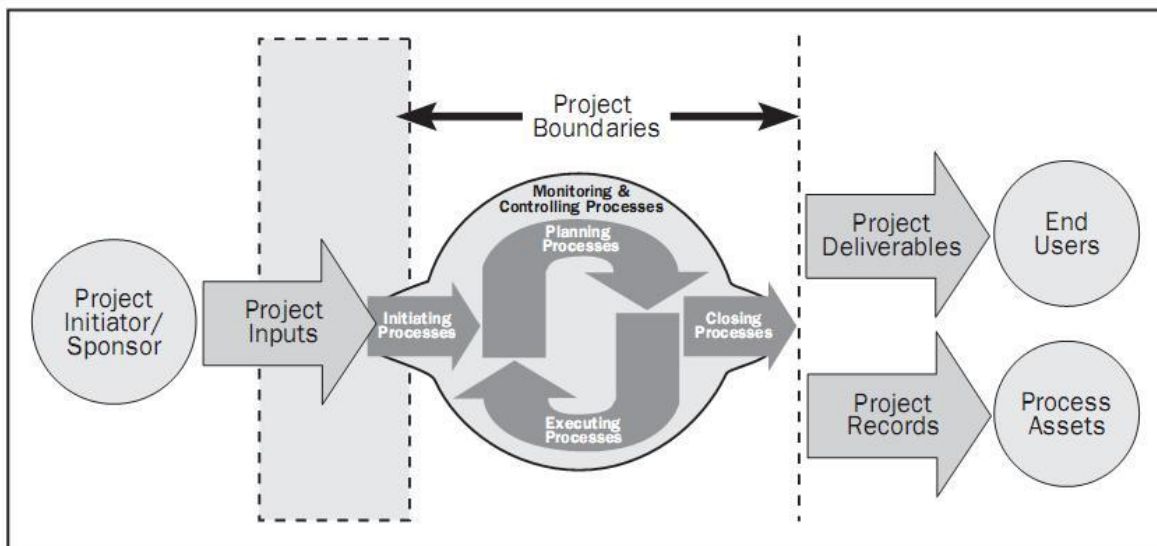


then re-designed to become a certification system for practitioners all over the world, and in nine different languages.

The 5th, and latest, edition of the PMBoK was published in 2013. The 5th edition has added one new Knowledge Area (Stakeholder Management) and five new Processes (PMBoK, 2013). For the purpose of this study, the 5th edition of the PMBoK guide will be referenced in the next sections on the Process Groups.

The PMBoK guide (2013) divides the project life cycle into five process groups, as illustrated in Figure 4.1, below:

1. Initiating Process Group
2. Planning Process Group
3. Executing Process Group
4. Monitoring and Controlling Process Group
5. Closing Process Group



**Figure 3-4. Project Boundaries**

Figure 4.1: Project Management Process Groups (Source: PMBoK, 2013, p. 50)

#### 4.4.1.1 Initiating Process Group

The initiation process group is the first step in the project life cycle. Based on the PMBoK (2013, p. 418), the Initiating Process Group consists of:

*‘those processes performed to define a new project or a new phase of an existing project by obtaining authorization to start the project or phase’.*

Two processes are considered essential when defining a new project: developing a project charter and identifying stakeholders, as seen in Figure 4.2 below. It is very essential to have the project key stakeholders involved during the planning stage. This will establish a mutual understanding between the parties involved and will help in achieving the goal.

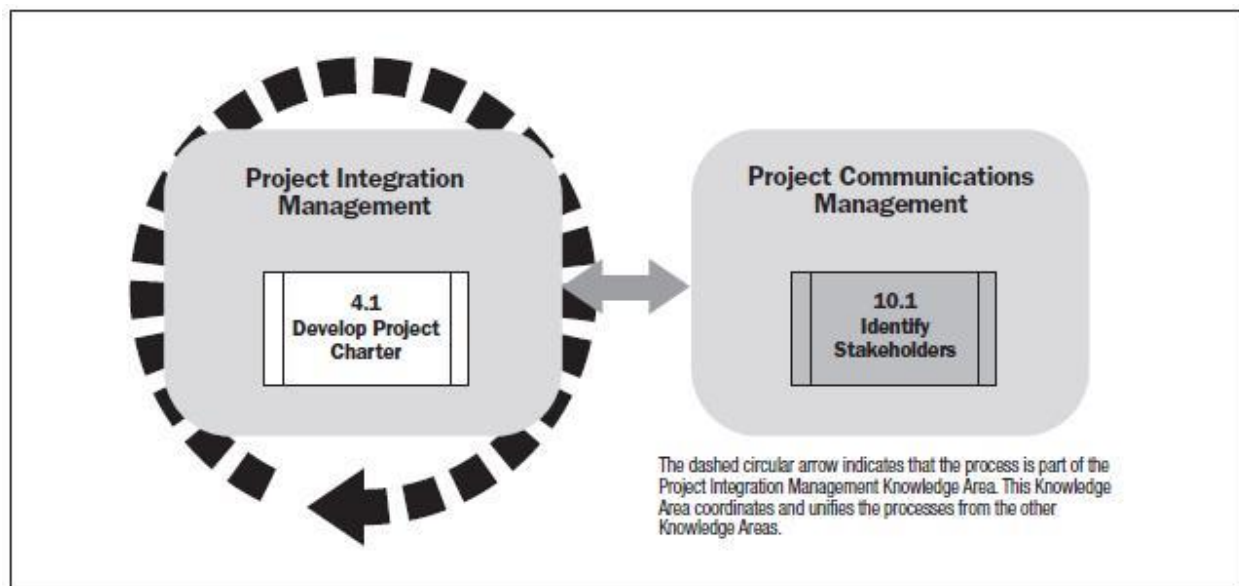


Figure 4.2: The PMBoK Initiating Process Group (Source: PMBoK, 2013)

#### 4.4.1.2 Planning Process Group

Based on PMBoK (2013, p. 418), the planning process group is defined as:

*'those processes required to establish the scope of the project, refine the objectives, and define the course of action required to attain the objectives that the project was undertaken to achieve'.*

The planning process group contains processes necessary in planning the tasks for a successful project. This process group has the biggest number of processes between the 5 process groups. During the planning stage, the project management plan is developed, requirements are collected, scope is defined, activities are defined, activity resources and durations are estimated, a schedule is developed, costs are estimated, budget is determined, human resource plan is developed, and quality, communications, procurements, and risk management are planned.

All project management models, including the PMI model, emphasize the importance of the planning on the basis that lack of or poor planning will result in project failure or delay which will in turn result in wasted effort, time and money. To avoid such loss, special attentions needs to be paid to this critical stage of the project life cycle. Figure 4.3, below, shows the complexity of the interaction between the different processes within the processes groups and knowledge areas. Proper planning is one of the critical success factors, according to Slevin (1987). Therefore, enough time should be spent planning the activities, with enough detail that makes all stakeholders know where the project is going. Most PM practitioners and academics acknowledge that time invested in planning usually pays off.

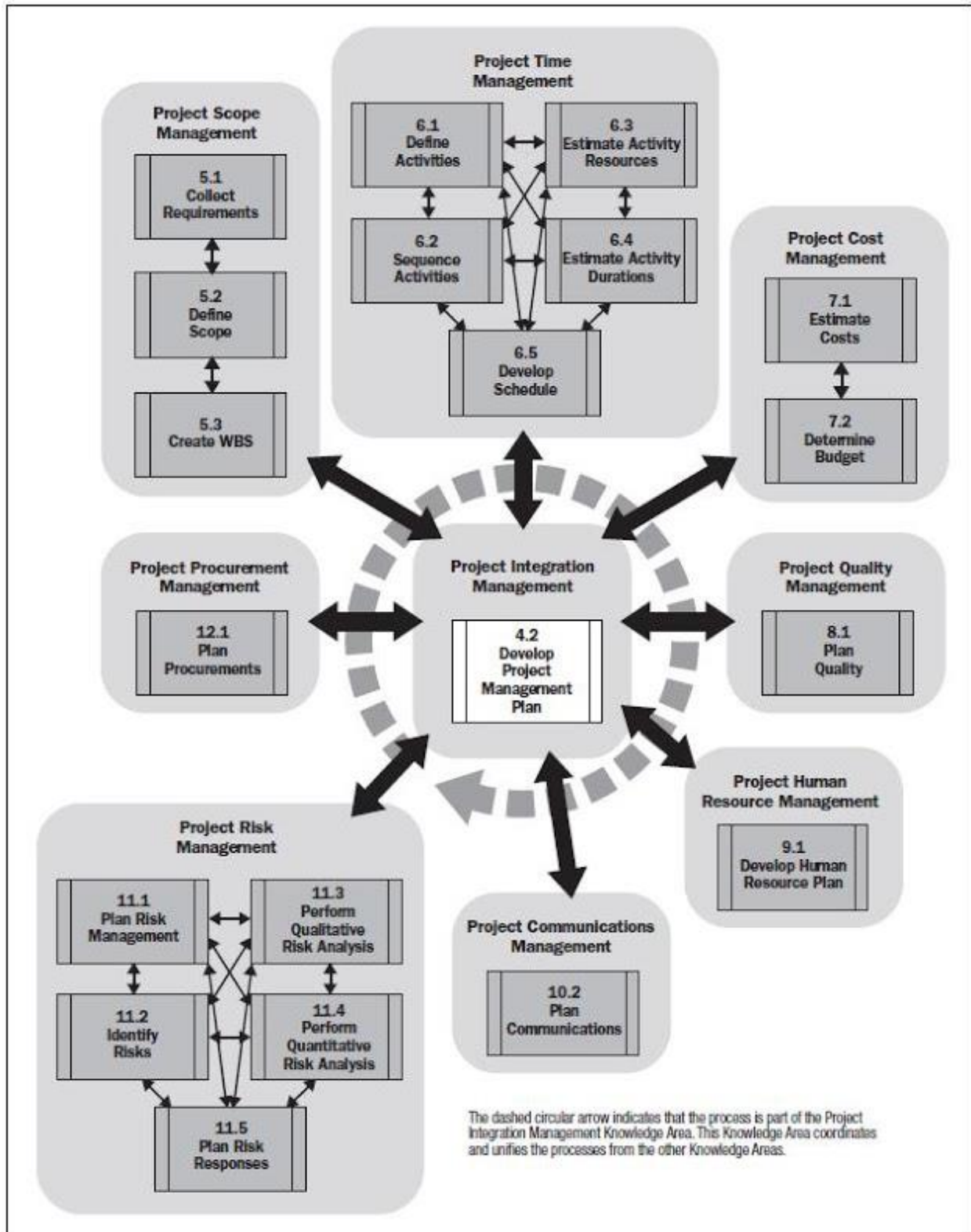


Figure 4.3: The PMBoK Planning Process Group (source: PMBoK, 2013)

#### 4.4.1.3 Executing Process Group

The executing process group is defined by PMBoK (2013, p. 418) as:

*‘those processes performed to complete the work defined in the project management plan to satisfy the project specifications’.*

During this stage, the project team is acquired, developed and managed, procurements are conducted, and project work is directly managed, as illustrated in Figure 4.4.

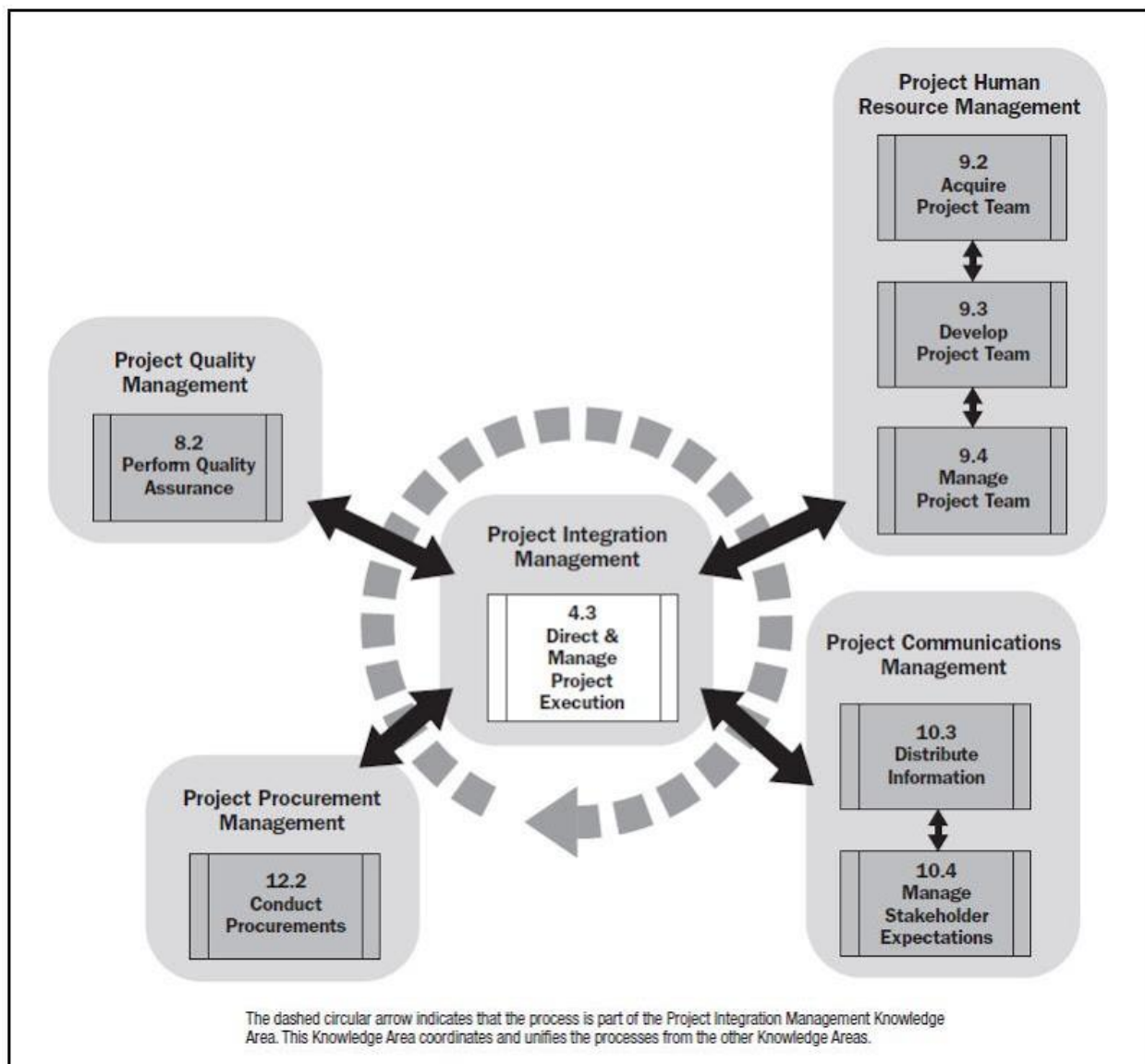


Figure 4.4: The PMBoK Executing Process Group (Source: PMBoK, 2013)

#### 4.4.1.4 Monitoring and Controlling Process Group

The monitoring and controlling process group, as seen in Figure 4.5, is defined as:

*‘those processes required to track, review, and regulate the progress and performance of the project; identify any areas in which changes to the plan are required; and initiate the corresponding changes’.* (PMBok, 2013, p. 418)

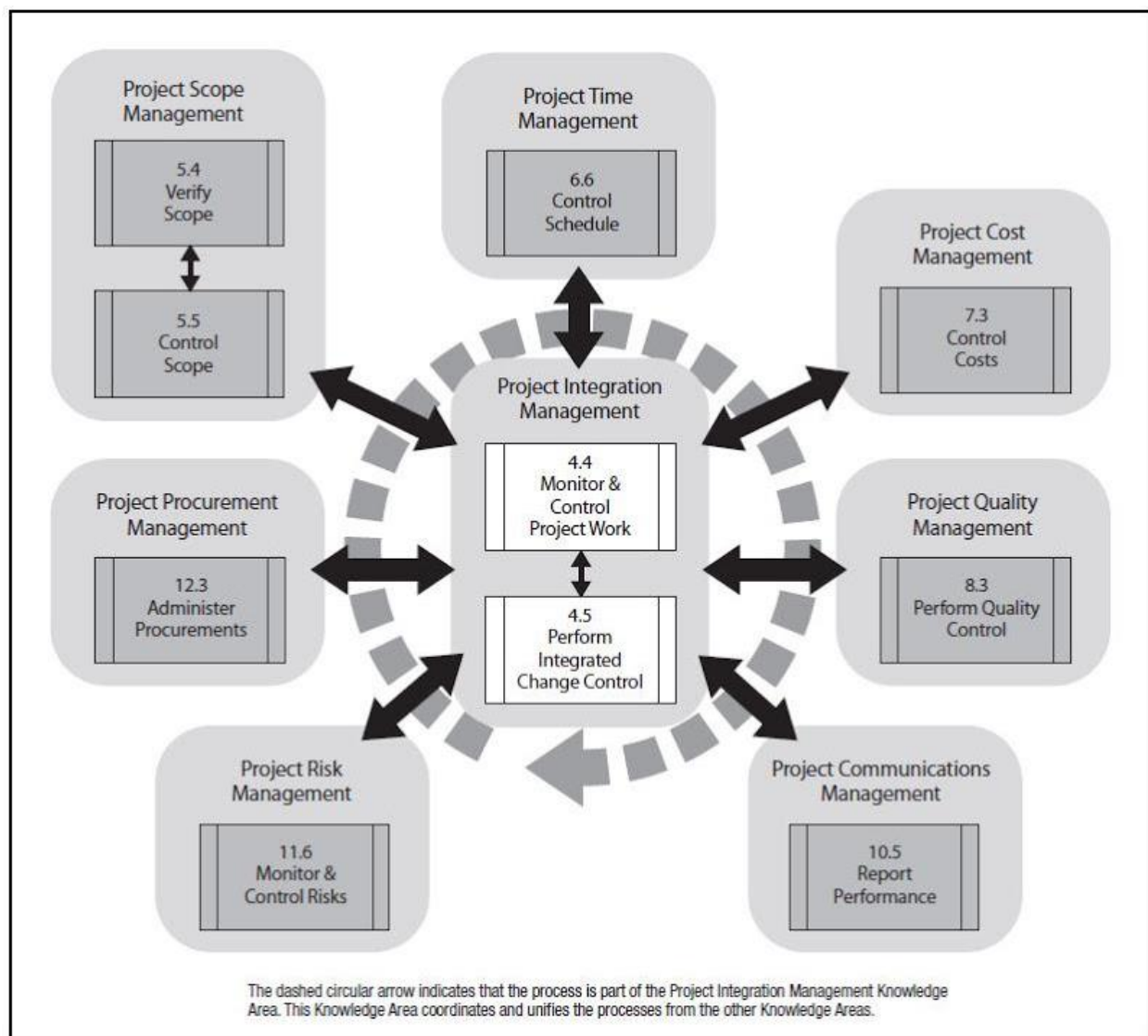


Figure 4.5: The PMBoK Monitoring and Controlling Group (Source: PMBoK, 2013)

#### 4.4.1.5 Closing Process Group

The closing process group, as seen in Figure 4.6, is defined as:

*‘those processes performed to finalize all activities across all Process Groups to formally close the project or phase’. (PMBoK, 2013, p. 418)*

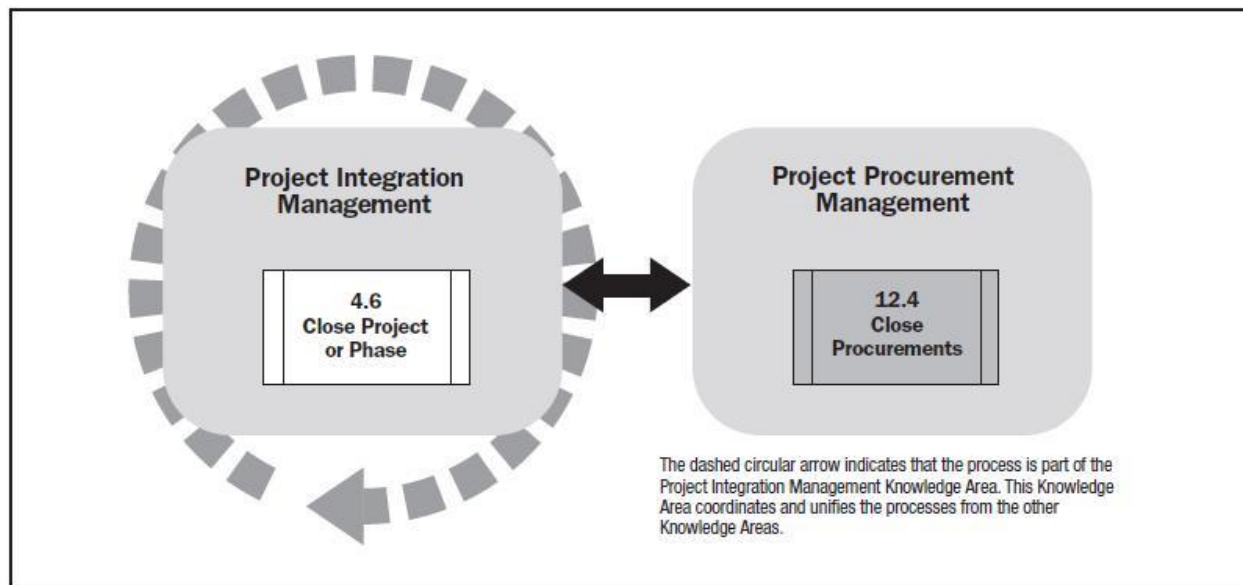


Figure 4.6: The PMBoK Closing Process Group (Source: PMBoK, 2013)

The PMBoK guide (2013) also divides project management into ten knowledge areas, accommodating 47 processes:

1. Integration Management
2. Scope Management
3. Time Management
4. Cost Management
5. Quality Management
6. Human Resources Management
7. Communications Management
8. Risk Management
9. Procurement Management
10. Stakeholder Management



The PMBoK guide introduces a matrix, as shown in Figure 4.7 below, that maps process groups and processes to the knowledge areas.

Knowledge Areas	Process Groups				
	Initiating Process group	Planning Process group	Executing Process group	Monitoring & Controlling Process group	Closing Process group
Project Integration Management	Develop Project Charter	Develop Project Management Plan	Direct and Manage work	Monitoring & Controlling project work Perform Integrated Change Control	Close Project or Phase
Project Scope Management		Plan Scope Management Collect Requirement Define Scope Create WBS		Validate Scope Control Scope	
Project Time Management		Plan Schedule Management Define Activities Sequence Activities Estimate Activity Resources Estimate Activity Durations Develop Schedule		Control Schedule	
Project Cost Management		Plan Cost Management Estimate Costs Determine Budget		Control Costs	
Project Quality Management		Plan Quality Management	Perform Quality Assurance	Perform Quality Control	
Project Human Resource Management		Plan Human Resource Management	Acquire Project Team Develop Project Team Manage Project Team		
Project Communication Management		Plan Communications Management	Manage Communications	Control Communications	
Project Risk Management		Plan Risk Management Identify Risks Perform Qualitative Risk Analysis Perform Quantitative Risk Analysis Plan Risk Analysis		Control Risks	
Project Procurement Management		Plan Procurements Management	Conduct Procurements	Control Procurements	Close procurements
Project Stakeholder Management	Identify Stakeholders	Plan Stakeholder Management	Manage Stakeholder Engagement	Control Stakeholder Engagement	

Figure 4.7: PMI Project Management Process Groups and Knowledge Area  
(Source: PMI, 2013)

Matos and Lopes (2013) conducted a study on the project management methodologies most commonly-used by IT project managers. They chose to investigate the PMBoK and PRINCE2 methodologies, to try to find the best practice in project management. They concluded that they are different approaches that were used to accomplish the same result: successful projects. They also concluded that that both methodologies are similar in terms of project planning. 'Project documentation and following up' are more complicated in PMBoK (Matos and Lopes, 2013, p. 793).



The PMI has made an assumption that projects are the same, and tools and techniques are valid for projects in the information system and construction industries (Matos and Lopes, 2013). Therefore, the American National Standards Institute (ANSI) has approved the PMBoK as a national standard in the U.S.A.

#### **4.4.2 The (PRINCE2) Model**

The UK-based, PProjects IN Controlled Environments (PRINCE2) model was published in 1996, with a contribution from 150 European organizations. PRINCE2 is the project management standard used on the government and private sector projects in the UK. PRINCE2 (PRINCE2, 2002) has seven processes, as outlined in Figure 4.8, and summarized in Table 4.1, below:

1. Starting Up a Project
2. Initiating a Project
3. Directing a Project
4. Controlling a Stage
5. Managing Product Delivery
6. Managing Stage Boundaries
7. Closing a Project

In addition to the seven processes, PRINCE2 (PRINCE, 2002) has eight components:

1. Business Case
2. Organization
3. Plans
4. Controls
5. Management of Risk
6. Quality in a Project Environment
7. Configuration Management
8. Change Control

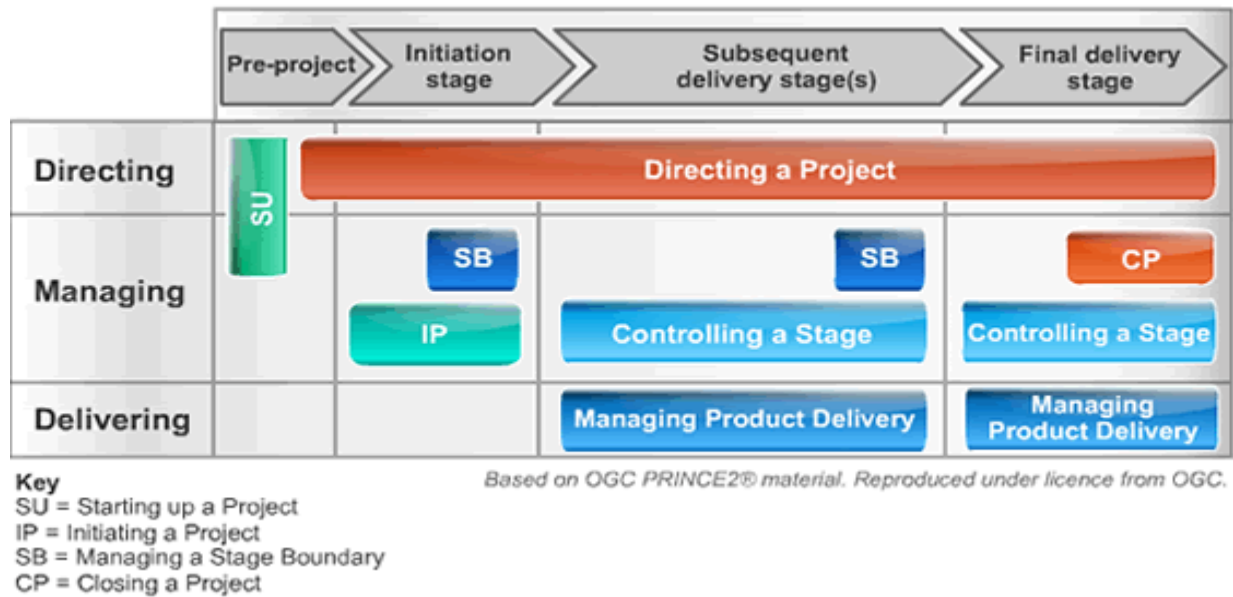


Figure 4.8: The PRINCE2 Process Model

Process	Overview
Starting up a project	<i>'Create the project management team; Define the project's objectives; Identify how a solution will be provided; Take a first look at the Business Case and risks; Plan the work needed to prepare project plans and controls and get management approval for the project to commence'</i>
Initiating a Project	<i>'Plan how the right quality of product will be produced; Plan the project; Expand the Business Case; Re-assess the risks; Identify how products will be controlled; Set up the necessary controls for the project; Prepare to get approval for the project'</i>
Directing a Project	<i>'Confirm the project Organisation; Agree the project Objectives; Approve the plan to generate the 'contract' for the project; Approve the 'contract'; Approve each stage of the project; Make decisions on any major problems; Keep senior management informed; Confirm the correct closure of the project'</i>
Controlling a Stage	<i>'Authorise work; Confirm work Completion; Capture progress Information; Capture and log issues; Analyse the impact of issues; Review progress, quality work, issues and risk status; Report progress'</i>

	<i>to Project Board; Escalate problems to Project Board; Take corrective action'</i>
Managing Product Delivery	<i>'Agree the work with the Project Manager; Plan the team's work; Supervise the team's Work; Report on quality and progress; Get approval for the completed products'</i>
Managing Stage Boundaries	<i>'Complete the performance statistics for the current stage; Plan the next stage (or produce an Exception Plan) and update the Project Plan; Check if the Business Case or risks have changed; Prepare a report for the Project Board'</i>
Closing a Project	<i>'Check that all products have been delivered and approved by the customer; Document any later actions that should be taken by the maintenance and support groups; Plan when and how to assess achievement of the expected benefits; Report on the project's performance'</i>

Table 4.1: Summary of PRINCE2 Model (Source: PRINCE2 Guide, 2002)

#### 4.4.3 The (P2M) Model

The Project & Program Management for Enterprise Innovation (P2M) guidebook was developed by the Project Management Association of Japan (PMAJ). It was published in 2001. The P2M guide was set to serve as a guideline for enterprise innovation through project and program management. As shown in Figure 4.9, the P2M model recognizes three different types of projects:

1. concept development (scheme model)
2. implementation (system model)
3. operation (service model)

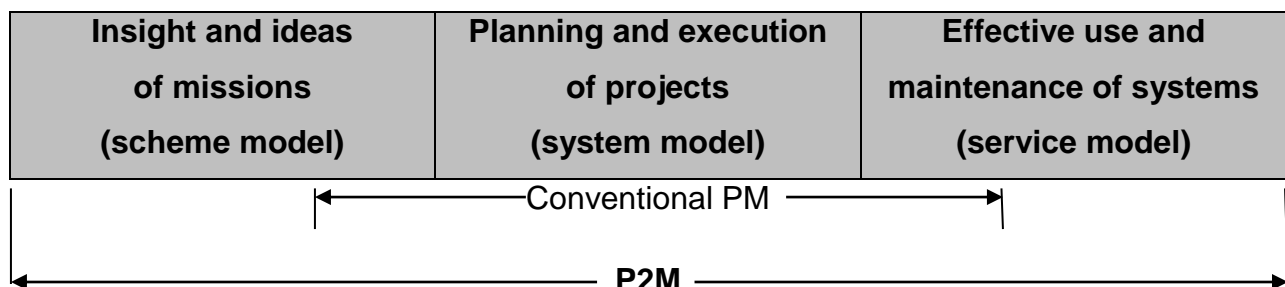


Figure 4.9: Domain of P2M Model

#### 4.4.4 Comparison between PMBoK and PRINCE2

Matos and Lopes (2013) outlined the differences between PMBOK and PRINCE2. A summary of these differences are shown in Table 4.2 below:

Concept	PMBoK	PRINCE2
Definition of project	<i>'A project is a temporary endeavour undertaken to create a product, service or result singular'</i>	<i>'A project is a management environment created for the purpose of delivering one or more business products according to a specified business case'</i>
Commonalities between both methodologies	<i>'Recognized as an international standard IEEE Std 1490-2003, which provides the fundamentals of project management'</i>	<i>'Is a structured method, considered a standard and recognized in both the public and private sectors'</i>
Characterization of both methodologies	<i>'A descriptive methodology: the detailed explanation of the techniques for project management'</i>	<i>'A perspective: details how the techniques of project management should be structured and implemented'</i>
Process vs. product orientation	<i>'Follows the orientation toward the processes used in developing the project'</i>	<i>'Has a guideline the final product, focusing on the successful delivery and quality'</i>
Project Manager	<i>'Project manager is the person responsible for meeting the goals'</i>	<i>'Project manager always responding to the project board'</i>
Processes in both methodologies	<i>'5 groups of processes: initiating, planning, executing, controlling &amp; closing'</i>	<i>'7 groups of processes: starting up, directing, planning, controlling a stage, managing product delivery, managing stage boundaries &amp; closing'</i>

Table 4.2: PMBoK vs. PRINCE2 (Source: Matos and Lopes, 2013)

Wideman (2002) believes that PMBoK and PRINCE2 serve different purposes. He looked at PMBoK and PRINCE 2 from a different angle, and he has summarized the differences between them as outlined in Table 4.3, below:

Category	PMBok	PRINCE2
Management Levels and Responsibilities	<i>'Project manager" is responsible for managing the project. "Project Director" and "executive" are not recognized. "Sponsor" is recognized but as one of the stakeholders'</i>	<i>'Project manager" is the person given the authority and responsibility to manage the project on a day-to-day basis to deliver the required products within the constraints agreed with the Project Board. PRINCE2 recognizes 4 levels of management: Corporate or Programme Management, Directing a Project, Managing a Project, and Managing Product Delivery'</i>
Authority Documentation	<i>'Neither "Business Case" nor "Project Brief" are recognized'</i>	<i>'PRINCE2 is heavy on documentation. Documents used are: Project Mandate, Project Brief, Business Case, and project Initiation Document'</i>
Special Project Management Roles	<i>'No special roles recognized beside Project Manager. Project Management Office (PMO) is used to support the Projects team'</i>	<i>'PRINCE2 defines "roles", not "jobs". Beside "Project Board", "Project Manager", and "Team Manager", special project management roles include: Project Support Office (PSO), Executive, Senior User, and Senior Supplier'</i>
Document Description Outlines	<i>'Only "Lessons Learned" is recognized by PMBoK'</i>	<i>'PRINCE2 recognizes 33 standard management "products" such as plans and reports. In addition to that, it recognizes these documents: Acceptance Criteria, Configuration Item Record, Issue Log, and Lessons Learned Log'</i>
Planning and Scheduling	<i>'Planning" is one of the five process groups applied to each phase of the project. Planning is also integrated across all of the knowledge areas'</i>	<i>'product-based Planning" focuses on the products that will be delivered with special attention to the "quality". It provides a "product-based framework'</i>

Table 4.3: Difference between PMBoK and PRINCE2 (Source: Wideman, 2002)

#### 4.5 PROJECT SUCCESS AND FAILURE

Projects fail for many different reasons. These include scope creep, unrealistic expectations and funding issues. However, before discussing the success and failure of projects, it is important to examine the meaning of *success* in this context. Pinto and Slevin (1988, p. 67) argue that:

*'there are few topics in the field of project management that are so frequently discussed and yet so rarely agreed upon as the notion of project success'.*

Therefore, and as long as there is no common definition of success, then what is considered a success for one researcher could be a failure to the other. In other words, it depends on the assessor of the project. According to Samset (1998, p. 22):

*'success is a relative measure related as much to what has been agreed as to what has actually been achieved'.*

Having the right project management tools and techniques is an important step towards success. The success of any project depends also on the teamwork during all the phases of the project (Elena, 2010). Knutson (2001) argues that putting together an efficient team is one of the important tasks of the project manager. A project can be a success for one group and a disaster for another. In ideal situations, projects are tagged as successful when they are within the scope, budget and time. Some researchers insist on adding two more variables: the quality and customer satisfaction.

The 2012 research conducted by the Standish Group states that project success (on time delivery, on budget, with all required features and function) rate has increased. The new success rate is 39%, failed rate is 18% and challenged rate is 43% (Standish Group, 2012, p. 1). For example, in 2004, the Standish Group reports a successful rate of 29%. Part of the reasons for this increase in success rate was the:

*'increase in project management as a profession and the trained project management professionals'. (Standish Group, 2012, p. 1)*

A recent study by Young and Poon (2013, p. 943) showed that 'top management support is more necessary than any other success factor'. They went even further to conclude that this success factor is sometimes sufficient for success. Similarly, earlier research by Young and Jordan (2008), based on five case studies demonstrated that top management support is the most important factor for project success. They suggested that the high rate of IT project failure could be linked to the lack or weakness of the top management support. This, if proved to be true, would be an important breakthrough.

Top management plays a crucial role in the selection of the project team, and therefore in the success or failure the project. Boonstra (2013) conducted a study to investigate the relationship between top management support and project success in IS projects. He concluded, and after the analysis of five different cases, that 'top management support is a multidimensional phenomenon that tends to change over time' (Boonstra, 2013, p. 498). In his framework, Boonstra (2013, p. 508) identified four elements that can be used to judge the top management support:

*'a) accommodating the implementation process, b) reshaping the organizational context, c) adapting the technology, and d) dealing with the stakeholders'.*

McComb et al. (2008) argues that securing a successful IT execution of IT projects, top management need to act as if they are project champions.

#### **4.6 CRITICAL SUCCESS FACTORS**

The use of the concept of Critical Success Factors (CSFs) is an effective approach to measure the success and failure of projects. In a study by Almajed and Mayhew (2013) on the critical success factors of IT projects, 17 factors were tested on a public

organization in Saudi Arabia. The researchers identified eight factors as the success factors of the IT projects in the public sector in Saudi Arabia. These factors were:

*'top management support and commitment, project management, project team competency, communication management, strategic planning, training and education, partners and suppliers' management and stakeholders' management'.*  
(Almajed and Mayhew, 2013, p. 7)

Crawford (2000) distinguished between two criteria related to any project success: how a project is classified as a success or a failure (success criteria) and the factors that play a significant part in the success of a project (success factors). Hyväri (2006) identified the following success factors: project mission, top management support, project schedule/plans, client consultation, personnel, technical task, client acceptance, monitoring and feedback, communication, and trouble shooting.

There is a need to identify the criteria used in a project evaluation before the project is categorized as a success or failure. Jeffery and Dennis (1987) stated that a project is considered a success if it's on schedule, on budget, satisfies all the objectives originally agreed on, and accepted and used by the client. Qiao et al. (2001, cited in Maina and Gathenya, 2013) has identified eight critical success factors, and they are:

*'appropriate project identification, stable political and economic situation, attractive financial package, acceptable toll/tariff levels, reasonable risk allocation, selection of suitable subcontractors, management control, and technology transfer'.*

Baccarini (1999) argues that project success needs to be evaluated at two different levels: project management success and project product success. *Project management success* is the successful implementation of the project management process which will, in turn, produce a successful project, while *project product success* concentrates on the overall outcome of the project. The success of project management and project product



are related to each other in a way that 'If the venture is not a success, neither is the project' (Pinkerton 2003, p. 344). One good example is the Sydney Opera House in Australia. The project was supposed to take five years at a cost of \$7 million, when the project was planned. It turned out to take 13 years at a cost of \$110 million (Young, 2013). Taking into account that this project is making good revenue for the owners, still the project management is classified as a complete failure.

A study by Dvir et al. (1998), has demonstrated that success factors vary from one project to another. In other words, project success factors are not global, and therefore assuming a global project management approach, when dealing with various types of projects, is inappropriate (Dvir et al., 1998). This does not mean that some project success factors are not common between projects.

#### **4.7 NATIONAL CULTURE AND INTERNATIONAL MANAGEMENT**

Hofstede (1980, p. 49) argues that the United States for nearly 60 years, has produced and exported, to the rest of the world, management theories in the field of 'motivation', 'leadership' and 'organization'. Consequently, the cultural influence of the United States is seen in a very clear way in these theories. Therefore, Hofstede (1980) has raised the question of whether such theories (which are produced in certain countries and represent a way of thinking, like the U.S.) can be applied in different countries with different cultural environment. In other words, Hofstede (1993) was trying to answer the question of whether a culture-free management theory can be applied universally. This is probably one of the reasons that made researchers, like Hofstede, think hard about finding solutions in the form of cultural frameworks and models. Parnell and Hatem (1999, p. 414) believe that 'management behaviour is deeply embedded in culture', and this behaviour is accepted in one culture but not so in another culture. One of the benefits of these models is to make it easy to apply certain management theories in a certain country or region and minimize the risk of failure.

Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) did a study on Hofstede's cultural framework and the possibility of applying the U.S. managerial theories in the Saudi context. On the one

hand, their results show that Arab managers, including Saudis, do not accept people who do not follow 'Islamic teachings and Arab traditions'. On the other hand, they show constant support and commitment towards their organizations. Saudi managers, just like other Arab managers, avoid direct confrontation, but whenever it happens they prefer to resolve it by 'authoritarian behaviour' (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993). Furthermore, they argued that Saudis are not fatalistic, when it comes to doing business. They are 'future-oriented', realistic in their planning and they always work towards preventing unfavourable results (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993).

Management practices are not as effective when they are applied abroad from their origin, and this is due to the fact that most multinational organizations, especially those of Anglo-Saxon origin, ignore the cultural differences (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997). For example, applying a matrix system within an organization in the Middle East will fail miserably, because the matrix approach challenges the loyalty to the functional manager (Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner, 1997), and in places like KSA, reporting to two managers is a prescription for an immediate failure. Obeidat, et al. (2012) argue that because Arab culture is different from Western culture that different management theories are needed for Arabian organizations.

American management theories were modified and used in Japan to suit that 'uncertainty-avoiding, semi-collectivist' nation (Hofstede, 1983, p. 89). This is an excellent example of a nation that adopted American management theories and made the adaptation a success story. Third world nations usually bring American management theories under 'technology transfer' (Hofstede, 1983, p. 89), and try to implement them as they are which usually lead to partial or complete failure.

Hofstede (1993) argues that his cultural dimensions do not show all the distinctions in management. To be able to understand management in a different region, you will need to have knowledge with the whole 'local scene'. The dimensions help us understand that people in other regions of the world live different lives, and think and feel differently Hofstede (1993). For example, some international organizations have had success in Saudi Arabia, while others fail, and this may be due to the failure of adaptation to the

Saudi customs (Daniels et al., 2004). One of the real challenges that most managers face, during certain assignments, is to integrate workers coming from different cultural backgrounds, to form a cohesive and successful team.

Black and Mendenhall (1991) stated that about 40 percent of managers working in different countries quit their work as a result of not meeting the business goals or for the 'poor adjustment to the local environment'. For that, understanding the local culture of other nations will give advantage to managers who manage international businesses or projects. One of the facts about Saudi Arabia is that two thirds of the individuals forming the workforce in the private sector, in Saudi Arabia, are foreigners. That explains the high unemployment (30 percent) in a country with all these resources and potential development, and this is because, according to Daniels et al., (2004), Saudis expect foreign workers to do everything for them.

#### **4.7.1 National Culture, Organizational Culture and Management**

The influences exerted (with different levels of power) by both national culture and organizational culture on man's behaviour, are well recognized, however, few researchers have examined the relationship between the two. Alder (2008) tried to answer the question of whether Organizational Culture can diminish National Culture, but discovered, to her surprise, that national culture outweighs organizational culture. This concurs with André Laurent (1990) when he concluded that '*a cultural view of organizational change*', that 'it appears that employees may be resisting a company's corporate culture if it is counter to the beliefs of their own national one'. Hofstede (1991) suggested that Organizational Culture is influenced by National Culture when he stated that 'behaviour at work is a continuation of behaviour learned earlier'.

Employees may face situations at their workplace where conflicts between National Culture and Organizational Culture appear. According to Katz (2005), employees facing such situations are likely to 'respond in ways typical of their national culture, not their organizational one'. To try to overcome the issues that may result from a conflict between the Organizational Culture and National Culture of employees within an

organization, Katz (2005) argues that a well-designed hiring policy, that takes into account the organization's internal policy may help in recruiting individuals that best fit and are in harmony with the organization's culture.

International Project Management theories such as the PMI principles, practices and techniques (represented by the PMBoK) can be described as a *codified* organizational culture. As such, and according to the previous arguments, these international theories may be adopted readily in one national culture and not in another. Thus, it could be proposed that conflict between the two cultures, namely organizational and national, may arise during the implementation of Western-based theories (such as standard project management, represented by PMBoK) in a nation like the KSA.

#### **4.8 PROJECT MANAGEMENT AND HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS**

PMBoK (2004) did not pay enough attention to *culture*. In fact, within the entire guide, the concept 'culture' was mentioned in eight pages only, and no mention of the concept 'national culture'. In the latest edition (PMBoK, 2013) 'culture' was mentioned in 35 different places, only, in the entire guide. This demonstrates that this project management reference (PMBoK) was written by a group of writers who thought that culture is not an issue, and 'a project is a project is a project' regardless of the social, political and cultural environment surrounding it. Many researchers have demonstrated that this way of thinking is wrong. For example, Sonja et al. (2004) acknowledged that cultural differences have significant impact on projects, and especially in strong cultural environment, where culture controls nearly all aspects of life.

A study conducted by Elena (2010) tries to explain the effect of cultural differences on project management, and highlights the advantages of having multi-cultural teams in projects. For efficient multi-cultural project management, Elena (2010, p. 658) suggests a four stage framework; 'learn the definition and different types of culture, understand the cultural differences, respect the cultural differences, and enjoy the richness of multi-cultural team'. Managing the influence of national culture on project communication, leadership, conflict resolution and decision making are very essential in cross-cultural

environments. The next sub-sections will discuss these topics and their impact on projects, in details.

#### 4.8.1 Project Communication

As projects become more and more complex, project communication becomes a very important factor in the success or failure of any project. Many researchers demonstrated that lack of, or poor, communication will result in delay or failure of projects. Mueller and Turner (2004, cited in Elena, 2010) investigated the common preferences of communication between multi-cultural teams in different countries, as seen in Table 4.4, below.

Country Group	Preferences
1. Japan, Taiwan and Brazil	1. Face-to-face, analytical at milestones
2. Hungary and India	2. Written status reports, fixed intervals
3. The Netherlands and Germany	3. Detailed progress reports, fixed intervals
4. Australia, United States, Canada, New Zealand, United Kingdom and Sweden	4. Continuous phone updates with written backup

Table 4.4: Countries and Project Communication Preferences

(Source: Mueller and Turner, 2004)

A study was conducted by Yasin et al. (1997) on American project managers and their Arab counterparts, attempting to investigate the impact of business culture on project managers' attitudes and characteristics. They concluded that

*'while the technical gap between American and Arab project managers appears to be narrowing, some significant differences still exist due to cultural and economic realities of both cultures'.* (Yasin et al., 1997, p. 26)

They added that

*'the social and economic culture in which project managers play a significant role in shaping their effective behaviour'.* (Yasin et al., 1997, p. 26)

As shown in Figure 4.10, a framework was developed by Yasin et al. (1997, p. 18) which explains the impact of the Arab and American cultures on project managers' attitudes. The framework can be linked to Hofstede's model (page 51 through 55) in terms of its description of the Arab culture: extended family structure and Islamic values. For business, in general, Yasin et al. (1997) concurs with Hofstede's findings that *reward is based on loyalty, concern for survival, and absence of systematic planning*. For PM, they concur with Hofstede on certain cultural elements such as the *need to deal with unqualified staff*.

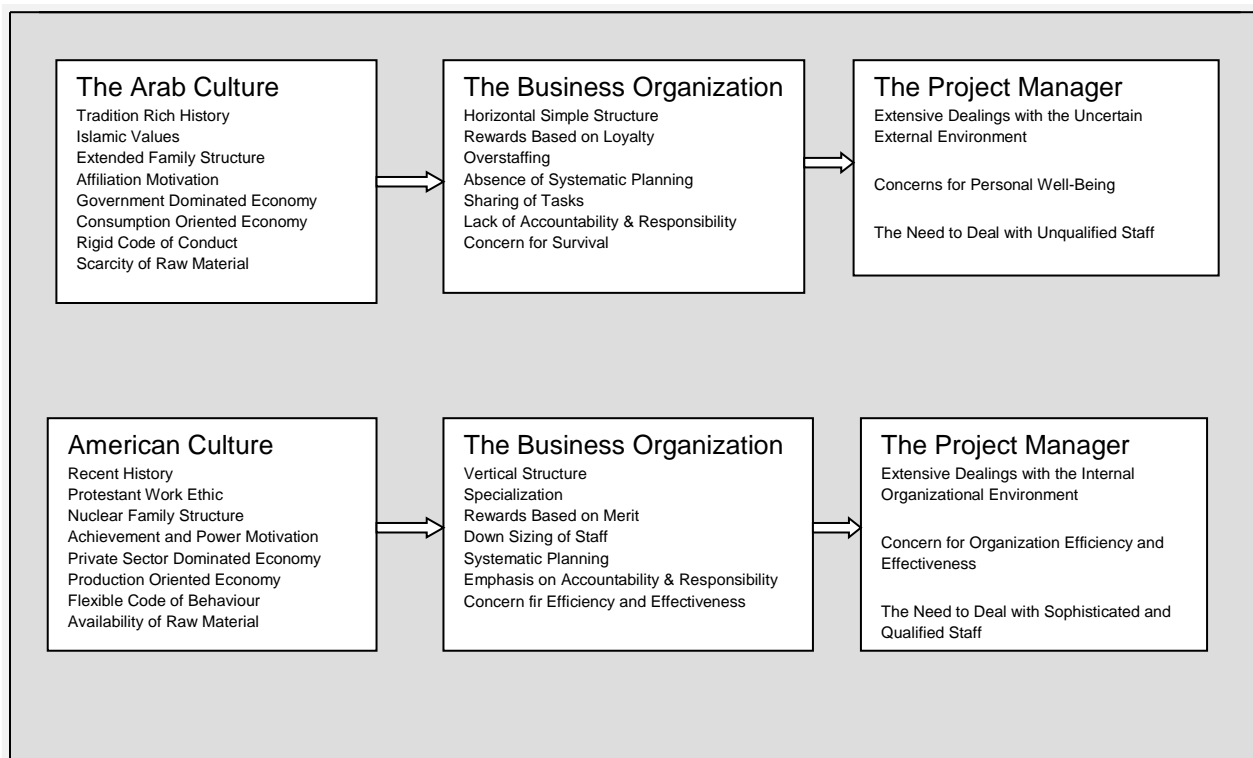


Figure 4.10: The Impact of Culture on the Project Manager

(Source: Yasin at el. 1997, p. 18)

There are many examples of high technology projects that failed as a result of mismanagement of cultural differences. One good example is the 'Iridium project'. Based on Cauley (1999), Iridium, the global satellite telephone company, declared bankruptcy in 1999, after spending \$5 billion on building and launching satellites to provide wireless telephone coverage worldwide. The project was a huge network of

satellites: it consists of 66 low orbit satellites, covering the entire earth, connecting and routing calls almost everywhere on this globe. One of the obvious reasons for this failure was the expensive service provided by this company. The cost of the handset was \$3,000 and the talk time was \$5 a minute. Another reason was the phones were heavy, and could not be used inside closed areas as line of sight was essential to establish the communication. The project was a complete failure as it ended up with only 10,000 subscribers, compared to the 500,000 subscribers estimated during the planning stage.

The results of a study by Loosemore and Muslmani (1999, p. 99) on the communication issues related to cultural differences between UK and Gulf nationals on international construction projects, 'indicated low level of sensitivity to Arabic values and to Arabic concept of time'. It also shows 'clear insensitivities on the importance of the Arabic language and an Arab's attitude towards uncertainty'. They concluded that insensitivities usually result in misunderstandings and conflicts within the organization. It can be assumed that some of these findings, in the construction projects, can be drawn on the ICT projects in the Gulf region. Skitmore et al. (2004) in their study on the influence of national culture on project communication concluded that project managers' attitude and behaviors are possibly controlled by the degree of their ability to manage the project. The research also demonstrated that the individual's perception of the communication process and its obstacles, how they react with the others, and how they expect to be dealt with, depend on the individual's national culture. This suggests that project managers need to 'think globally and act locally' (Skitmore et al., 2004, p. 10). For an efficient communication in projects abroad, 'stress management training' has been recognized and developed as an important tool, to help in overcoming the cultural issue (Harvey, 1997).

The American and Arab cultures were investigated by Zaharna (1995) in terms of their views of the language as a way of communication. To distinguish between the two cultures, the study uses different variables, such as high-context vs. low-context, indirect vs. direct, doing vs. being, oral vs. literate, and linear vs. non-linear. This is summarized in Table 4.5, below.

Cultural Variable	Description
High-context & Low-context	American culture is classified as low-context: it places more meaning in the language code and very little meaning in the context Arab culture is classified as high-context: meaning is embedded more in the context rather than the code
Indirect & Direct	American culture preference: direct communication Arab culture preference: indirect communication
Doing & Being	American culture's emphasis on achievement and accomplishment. i.e. the "doing" Arab culture's emphasis on "who the person is" i.e. the "being"
Oral & Literate	American culture is a literate dominant society: relies on factual accuracy of a message Arab culture is an oral dominant society: relies on the emotional resonance of a message
Linear & Non-linear	American culture would be more representative a linear thought framework: "has transformed auditory and oral communication into visual communication by means of written symbols, organized into linear thought patterns" (Carey Dodd, 1982, p. 163) Arab culture is non-linear

Table 4.5: Summary of cultural variables (Source: Zaharna, 1995, pp. 242-245)

For the Arab culture, Zaharna (1995, p. 252) concluded that the language's 'emphasis is on form over function, affect over accuracy, and image over meaning'. Rees and Pinnington (2013), conducted a study on Arab and British project managers, in the UAE, in an attempt to investigate the impact of national culture on project planning. In fact, the study tried to answer this question: 'how does the Arab national culture and the British national culture impact project managers' perceptions of project planning?' (Rees and Pinnington, 2013, p. 213). It was concluded that national culture has influenced project management in Scope, Time planning, Integration, Innovation/Technology, and Communication. The Arab project managers scored higher than the British project



managers on *communication*, while the British project managers scored higher on the other variables. Overall it was concluded that national culture impacts the way a project manager interprets the planning phase of the project (Rees and Pinnington, 2013). This finding proves that different project managers, with different cultural background, are expected to run similar projects in different ways (Zwikaël et al., 2005).

Cultural awareness, in addition to other cultural differences, were studied by many researchers such as Shore & Cross (2005) and Kendra & Tapiin (2004), emphasizing on the role of culture in the project's success or failure. Yen et al. (2007), in their Master Level Thesis, summarized the cultural differences, as shown in Table 4.6, below.

Cultural Difference	Studies which addressed cultural issues
Culture Awareness	Henrie & Souza-Poza (2005) , Shore & Cross (2005), Sonja et al (2007), Kendra & Tapiin (2004), Vaupel & Schmolke (2004)
Decision Making	Muller et al (2007)
Decision Bureaucracy	Kerzner (2000), Kleim et al (1997), Briner et al (1996), Pant et al (1996), Low & Leong (2000), Wang & Liu (2007)
Teamwork	Mead (1998), Wang & Liu (2007), Chen and Partington (2004), Low and Leong (2000)
Leadership & Empowerment	Andersen (2003), Firth & Krut (1991), Downes et al (2002), Chen & Partington (2004), Muller & Turner (2005)
Business Relationships	Low & Leong (2000), Wang & Liu (2007), Pan et al (2004)
Risk Management	Mulcahy (2002), Low & Leong (2000), Wang & Liu (2007), Pan & Zhang (2004)
Conflict Resolution	Schneider (1997), Foster (1992), Chen & Partington (2004), Gobeli et al (1998) Mulcahy (2002), Pinto & Kharbanda (1995)
Project Failure	Dinsmore (1984), Jaeger & Kanungo (1990), Verma (1995), Muriithi & Crawford (2003)

Table 4.6: Summary of studies on cultural differences in project management  
(Source: Chin Mei Yen, Amy Pulatov and Bakhtier (2007), Master Level Thesis)

Very few studies, were located by the researcher that linked project management to Hofstede's cultural dimensions. For the sake of this research, Hofstede's (1983) work is considered as a base study. Project management can be linked to differences in national cultures (Hofstede, 1983). Hofstede (1983) argues that differences in national culture will not vanish and this will cause problems to the management process in multi-cultural companies. Hofstede (1983) concludes that project management will fit better in the USA culture than anywhere else.

Project management is a process which was founded by nations with individualist cultures (Hofstede, 1983), such as USA and UK. Remember that the USA scored the highest on the 'individualism' index. To be able to apply project management practices and procedures on projects in a collectivist culture, extra care needs to be taken of how the stakeholders are related to each other during the life cycle of the project (Hofstede, 1983).

Hofstede (1983) is convinced that project managers with an individualist background, and working in a collectivist environment, need to invest in their project-team building. Building a good relationship with the team could involve exchanging presents between the project manager and the project team, and this can be interpreted as a 'bribe' in the individualist countries code of conduct rules (Hofstede, 1983). The Hofstede's dimensions; 'power distance' and 'uncertainty avoidance' are also related to project management, as they help explaining how power is distributed and how outcomes are made predictable within businesses (Hofstede, 1983).

Hofstede (1983) demonstrated how national culture impact how project managers behave. He showed how three different project managers groups, from France, Germany and UK, behaved when they were given a scenario problem. They solved the problem using three different priorities, proving that they belong to different way of thinking and, therefore, different management approaches. The French proved to have larger power distance and strong uncertainty avoidance, while the Germans proved to have strong uncertainty avoidance and smaller power distance, and the British proved to have small power distance and weak uncertainty avoidance.

Hofstede (1983, p. 48) states that 'a strong organizational culture can overcome barriers in a national culture'. What if the project is multinational that involves stakeholders from different cultures? How can we force our organizational culture and minimize the effect of the national culture on projects? Hofstede (1983, p. 47) answered these question and suggested that a program manager, in this case, has to 'adapt his way of working to the models of organizations in the minds of their people'.

Isah et al. (n.d.) studied the impact of cultural differences in managing complex projects in developing countries. They concluded that problems may arise when the behaviour of certain members of the project team are misinterpreted by the rest of the team. This usually causes mistrust, irritation, suspicion, and conflict which will result in significant consequences for the individual members of the teams and for the companies involved. Isah et al. (n.d., pp. 117-118) believe that the framework suggested by Hofstede (1983) is a perfect fit in dealing with these cultural differences. They went on to suggest that organizations need to adapt this framework, which is summarized as follows:

1) Building Awareness of

- ☐ own culture
- ☐ cultural differences

2) Developing Knowledge of

- ☐ the impact of cultural differences
- ☐ the relative strengths and weaknesses of different cultures in a managerial setting

3) Building Skills

- ☐ identifying the impact of different cultural settings for managerial problems
- ☐ adapting behaviours to achieve effective results in different cultural settings

#### **4.8.2 Project Leadership**

Leadership is one of the key elements of project management and has a major role to play in the success or failure of a project. Part of the leader's job is to provide support for their subordinates, including clarification and motivation, to produce a successful project. House (1971) placed emphasis on the effect of leaders' behaviour on

productivity, satisfaction and performance of the subordinates. According to House and Mitchell (1974), there are four types of leadership behaviour:

1. Directive leadership behaviours - aim to minimize the 'role ambiguity of subordinates' by providing clear instructions and procedures to achieve the required goal.
2. Supportive leadership behaviours - happen when the leader is being friendly and considerate towards his subordinates in order to build trust within the company.
3. Participative leadership behaviours - aim to encourage subordinates to be engaged in decision making to achieve the objective.
4. Achievement oriented leadership behaviour - aim to encourage performance excellence within the organization.

Hofstede's (1980) cultural dimensions can have an influence on leadership behaviour within an organization. The individual cultural dimensions were investigated by several researchers to create a link between national culture and one of the most important elements of project management; leadership. *Power distance* is one of the most powerful cultural dimensions in terms of its impact on project management (Dickson et al., 2003). This dimension explains how power distribution is expected and accepted by employees, and therefore it influences the type of leadership behaviour adapted in the organization. In high power distance environments, like KSA, subordinates are heavily dependent on their supervisors. Offermann and Hellmann (1997) concluded in their research that the 'paternalistic management' style is more common in high power distance environments.

According to Lachman et al. (1997, p. 48) the processes that help developing of leadership style are: 'decision making process, coordination, degree of control and direction, organization hierarchy, the participation level of employees and the process involved in setting goals'. Pascale (1978) states that the variation between high and low power distance cultures is significant; in a low power distance environment, a participative leadership style is used, while in a high power distance environment, a non-participative style is used. This concurs with Hofstede's (2001) argument that

leaders in high power distance cultures do not consult with their subordinates before taking decisions. In high power distance cultures, the 'top down approach' is widely used when in coordinating, monitoring, and controlling employees within an organization (Lachman et al., 1997).

Anbari, et al. (2009) have reviewed literature on how cross cultural differences in projects are managed. They grouped cultural dimensions into seven categories: *relations between people, motivational orientation, attitudes toward time, control, socio-cultural dimensions, context, and convergers and divergers*. 'Individualism versus collectivism' were grouped under 'relationship between people', 'masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance' were grouped under 'motivational orientation', and 'long-term versus short-term orientations' were grouped under 'attitudes toward time' (Anbari, et al., 2009, p. 2).

Using Hofstede's cultural model, Bredillet, et al. (2010, p. 192) investigated the influence of culture on the project management deployment. 'PM deployment' refers to the acceptance and adoption of the project management by the individuals and groups. Bredillet and his colleagues (2010, p. 183) demonstrated that project management is deployed:

1. in small power distance countries better than in large power distance countries
2. independently of the masculinity/femininity dimension
3. in weak uncertainty avoidance countries better than in strong uncertainty avoidance countries
4. in individualist countries better than in collectivist countries

Tan and Chong (2003) conducted research on construction employees to determine the factors that impact the perception of power distance within the organizations in Singapore. They argue that work ethic, superior-subordinate relations, team building, handling of disagreements, perceptions of justice and trust, and organization commitment are all affected by power distance (Tan and Chong, 2003, p. 529). They concluded that perceptions of power distance are not easy to gather but may be

accounted for by a group of twelve factors: employee-centered management, seniority of employees, perceived hierarchy, respect for authority, perceived challenge and learning at the workplace, communication, fear of expressing disagreements, having an open mind, submissiveness to older siblings, country's power distance orientation, perceived office design, and perceived status (Tan and Chong, 2003, p. 535). According to Merritt and Helmreich (1996), high power distance recognizes tall organization hierarchies and differentiates, in terms of status, between employees. Subordinates are expected to follow the instructions of their superiors (Bochner and Heskett, 1994). This implies that subordinates may accept autocratic or paternalistic behaviour as a way of exercising the leadership (Fedor and Werther, 1995).

#### **4.8.3 Project Conflict Resolution**

Conflict resolution is an important part of project management activities but can be time- and effort-consuming, if not conducted well. Thomas and Schmidt (1976) found that managers usually spend about 20% of their time trying to resolve conflicts. Previous studies have tried to link one of Hofstede's cultural dimensions, namely Individualism-Collectivism, to conflict resolution style. For example, Trubisky et al. (1991) argue that the Individualism/Collectivism cultural factor impacts one's choice of conflict resolution style. Morris et al. (1998) concluded in their study that individualistic nations such as, U.S.A. and U.K., lean towards giving priority towards personal goals, while collectivistic nations, such as Singapore and China, usually give priority to group's needs. The 'indirect and passive' communication styles are related to the 'avoiding and obliging' conflict resolution styles. This is more common in collectivistic environments, while the 'indirect and active' styles are more appreciated in individualistic nations (Wu et al., 2001). According to Lather et al. (2010), different nations prefer different styles of conflict management. For example, Americans prefer the competing style, Australians prefer the collaborative and compromising style, Indians prefer accommodating style, and Chinese prefer the compromising and avoiding. Based on Hofstede's cultural classification, the U.S.A is an individualistic nation while China and India are collectivistic nations. This result may be applied to other collectivistic nations, such as K.S.A. All Arab nations, according to Hofstede (1983), are classified as collectivistic.

Little related literature was found on the influence of collectivism on conflict resolution for Arab nations.

#### 4.8.4 Project Decision Making

Shore (2008) examined eight projects that had been categorized as failures, to determine if understanding and countering a 'set of systematic biases' can be beneficial in preventing project failure from happening. Table 4.7, below, shows a summary of these systematic biases (common elements in the human decision-making process), as outlined by Shore (2008, p. 7).

Systematic Bias	Definition
Available data	A data-collection process that is restricted to data that is readily or conveniently available (Bazerman, 1994)
Conservatism	Failure to consider new information or negative feedback (Beach & Connolly, 2005)
Escalation of commitment to a failing course of action	Additional resources allocated to a project that is increasingly unlikely to succeed. (Keil & Montealegre, 2000; Keil et al., 2007; Schwenk, 1984; Staw, 1981)
Groupthink	Members of a group under pressure to think alike, and to resist evidence that may threaten their view (Haslam, 2004; Haslam et al., 2006; Janis, 1971)
Illusion of control	When decision makers conclude that they have more control over a situation than an objective evaluation of the situation would suggest (Langer, 1975; Martz, Neil, & Biscaccianti, 2003)
Overconfidence	Level of expressed confidence that is unsupported by the evidence (Bazerman, 1994; Fischhoff, Slovic, & Lichtenstein, 1977; Russo & Schoemaker, 1989; Schwenk, 1984)
Recency	Disproportionate degree of emphasis placed on the most recent data (Beach & Connolly, 2005; Chan, 1995)
Selective perception	The situation where several people perceive the same circumstances differently; varies with the ambiguity of the problem or task (Dearborn & Simon, 1958; Russo & Schoemaker, 1989)
Sunk cost	The inability to accept that costs incurred earlier can no longer be recovered and should not be considered a factor in future decisions (Beach & Connolly, 2005; Staw & Ross, 1987)

Table 4.7: Summary of systematic biases (Source: Shore, 2008, p. 7)

Shore (2008) concluded that no matter how aggressively the project management skills and techniques are implemented, understanding the vocabulary of systematic biases could be useful in preventing a project failure.

LeFebvre and Franke (2013), attempted to answer the question of how culture norms and values influence decision making during conflicts. A comparison was made between cultures in a highly individualistic nation (U.S.A.) and a highly collectivistic nation (Ghana). The study demonstrates that

*'individuals with individualistic background are more rational in their decision making, while individuals with collectivistic background are more dependent in their decision making.'* (LeFebvre and Franke, 2013, pp.135-136 & 140-142).

In their study, Al-Hajiri and Hussein (1997) concluded that in Qatar managers appear to give support to subordinates to take part in decision making in personal-related issues, but not in issues related to the organization. Al-Malki (1989) argues that less than half of executives ask for their subordinates' opinions before they take decisions. Even though Qatar is part of the GCC, and shares religion and language with KSA, leaders or managers in KSA are different than their counterparts in neighbouring countries like Kuwait or Qatar. Saudi managers' values are based on Islam, and therefore they show an inclination towards individualism (Hunt and At-Twajri, 1996).



## **CHAPTER FIVE: RESEARCH DESIGN**

### **5.1 INTRODUCTION**

The conclusion of the literature review, in *Chapters 1 through 4*, leads to the next logical step: the selection of the research strategy. Researchers have a choice of research strategy, depending on the main research question and objectives. The aim of this study is to answer whether the national culture, in KSA, influences the applicability of the PMBoK processes, and attempts to determine the cultural factors that impact the success or failure of ICT projects.

This chapter will also discuss the case study approach, its validity and reliability, qualitative research methodology, the data collection by the means of semi-structured interviews and the data analysis strategy. Furthermore, this chapter will discuss the preparation for the data collection, arrangements for site visits and the recording of the interviews. An overview of the data coding and analysis approach will be given.

The second part of this chapter will discuss the generation of the propositions and the proposed framework. There will be an attempt to map the questionnaire to the cultural dimensions of Hofstede.

### **5.2 RESEARCH STRATEGY**

In general, Saudi organizations are very reluctant to open up for outsiders. Finding organizations that accept research inside their facilities and interviews with their employees was not an easy task. The fact that the researcher has lived in Saudi Arabia for the past 14 years helped in gaining access and building trust relatively more quickly.

The researcher's original plan was to base this study on data obtained from a military organization. The reason for that was the fact that very few studies are available on project management in military entities. After a thorough discussion with the research supervisor, a decision was made to opt for civilian organizations due to the expected increased difficulty in gaining access to interviewees and data concerning the military.

Having decided this, and having made approaches, three private and one public organization have agreed to participate in this study.

### **5.3 QUALITATIVE METHODOLOGY**

In his book, *Case Study Research: Design and Methods*, Yin (1994) suggested different research approaches to serve different purposes, depending on the questions asked. For the purpose of this study, a qualitative approach was selected, as it is seen to best achieve the objective of the research.

Researchers choose between qualitative, quantitative, or both methods, depending on the outcome of the research. Conducting an experiment and trying to validate it, can be best done by adopting quantitative research, whereas, a qualitative research best used to study certain behaviour (Walsh, 2003) in its natural setting (Abusabha & Woelfel, 2003). The main characteristic of qualitative research is that it produces words not numbers, as data, which will be coded and analysed, at a later stage. Qualitative approach is designed to answer the '*what*', '*how*', and '*why*' questions rather than the '*how much*' and '*how many*'.

*'Not everything that can be counted counts, and not everything that counts can be counted'.* (Albert Einstein)

The qualitative approach has been criticized by some scholars and accused of being imprecise, especially when samples selected for the research are small. '*Qualitative research aims for greater depth but allows less precision*'. (Sprey, 1995, p. 873). Another criticism of this methodology is the fact that it is sometimes difficult to prove that the results are not biased by the researcher's own opinion. For this study, the qualitative methodology was chosen, despite this criticism, as qualitative data is needed to carry out the research.

### **5.4 THE ADOPTED APPROACH**

Conducting qualitative research in social science can take many forms, including: qualitative interviews, direct observations, and case studies. Each has own advantages

and disadvantages. Each one of these methods will be described, briefly, with a focus on the case study, as a chosen approach for this research.

#### **5.4.1 Qualitative Interviews Approach**

Case study data are most commonly collected by interviews and/or direct observations. Collecting data by observations can be lengthy process and most likely to consume a longer time. As a result, interviews, as a way of collecting data, was seen as appropriate for the sake of this study, in addition to the researcher's observations. Another reason for selecting the interviews approach is the limited data available on the topic of the research. Therefore, interviewing the selected participants was seen as an efficient way of digging deep into the subject, by engaging in face-to-face discussions. Collecting data through interviews is a very common approach to collecting qualitative data (Amaratunga, 2002). In depth interviews can explore experiences and beliefs of the participants. Interviews are basically conducted to get the meaning of what the interviewee says (Kvale, 1996).

There are three different categories of interviews that are intended for different purposes: these are structured, semi-structured and unstructured, and, as the name suggests they reflect the degree of flexibility the researcher wants to adopt. In this case the semi-structured approach was chosen to maximize the benefit of the interviews. There is more flexibility than with a structured approach and the researcher can build up on, develop, or clarify what the interviewee has to say during the discussion and therefore makes use of the unexpected data he receives from the interviewee.

It is extremely important for the researcher to select a credible and indicative sample for the study. The selection is mainly based on the ability of the interviewees to give useful data. For the purpose of this study, the participants were selected from more than one category in the ICT sector: project managers, team leaders, project engineers, and Project Management Office (PMO) managers. This category is the most related to our research question, and for sure the one who can benefit our study with the relevant experience they have.

### **5.4.2 Direct Observations Approach**

Many researchers, such as Mason (2002), have considered observation as a research technique. He argued that observation involves

*'the researcher immersing herself or himself in the research setting, and systematically observing dimensions of that setting, interactions, relationships, action events...within it'.* (Mason, 2002, p. 60).

One of the key advantages of observations is the fact that they happen in their natural settings. Data collected in such environments is considered rich and valuable. By contrast, data collected by observation is time consuming.

In many cases people say what contradicts with their behaviour. Participant observation, by the researcher, can be a powerful tool in making sure the right data is collected from the field during the interviews. In qualitative research, the researcher can benefit the most when he or she is a participant in the research situation. Observational research is not just being out in the field and watching the behaviour of a certain group. Participant observation may require researcher to be part of the researched group or community. In some cases, the researchers benefit from being industry practitioners. Being at work, in the heart of the event watching and participating in the daily actions helps in gathering rich and valuable information about the studied phenomenon.

### **5.4.3 Case Studies Approach**

According to Myers (2003), the case study is the most adopted qualitative research approach in Information Systems. The case study is a research approach that concentrates on studying a phenomenon in its natural setting. By contrast, the experiment, which is regarded as a quantitative research approach, isolates the phenomenon from its context. (Iacono, et al., 2009).

The case study research was described by Schell (1992) as

*'the most flexible of all research designs, allowing the researcher to retain the holistic characteristics of real-life events while investigating empirical events'.* (Schell, 1992)

While Yin (1984) defined it as

*'a contemporary phenomenon in its real life context, especially when the boundaries between phenomenon and context are not clearly evident'.* (Yin, 1984)

Yin (2009) recommends using multiple case study approach, in such research environments. This allows the researcher to compare the findings from multiple projects by conducting a cross-case analysis based. In some cases, the case study approach can be complemented by the use of another approach: surveys. According to Attewell and Rule (1991), 'each is incomplete without the other'. The researcher believes that using both approaches can enhance the chance of obtaining valuable data. According to Yin (1994) six different sources of data can be used in the study case approach. These sources are: 'documents, archival records, interviews, direct observation, participant observation and physical artifacts'. Multiple research methods are used by many researchers in different fields. It is always for the benefit of the IT research to adopt several approaches of data collection (Kling, 1991 & Bikson, 1991).

Attewell and Rule suggest that

*'conventional survey methods, such as mail questionnaires and telephone interviews, are inappropriate for many of the issues we need to address [in IS research], and that a multi-method approach is more effective'.* (Attewell and Rule 1991)

Taking into account the above arguments and the fact that the phenomenon National Culture and its impact on Project Management in KSA, can't be separated from its

context, the multiple case study approach was considered to be most appropriate for this research.

#### 5.4.3.1 The Interviews

The selected participants work for ICT organizations in the private and public sectors. Only one ICT public sector organization, based in Riyadh, agreed to participate in this study. This is understandable due to the sensitivity of this subject: the national culture. All participating project managers are males. It is, in fact, very rare to find females working in the ICT business, particularly in Saudi Arabia, as project managers. Three different private sector ICT organizations, based in Riyadh, have agreed to participate in the study. A total of 15 ICT professionals were interviewed over three months period, from April through June 2015, as shown in Table 5.1 below. Each interview lasted between 40 and 60 minutes.

Organization (case)	Sector	Interviewee Job Title	Interviewee Nationality	Date of Interview	Reference used for interviewees
<b>A</b>	Private	Technical Manager	Saudi	1 April 2015	C6-PA
	Private	Team Leader	Saudi	13 April 2015	C2-PA
	Private	Project Manager	Jordanian	20 April 2015	C1-PA
	Private	Project Engineer	Lebanese	12 May 2015	C5-PA
	Private	Project Engineer	Saudi	7 June 2015	C4-PA
	Private	Project Engineer	Jordanian	15 June 2015	C3-PA
<b>B</b>	Private	Managing Director	Saudi	9 April 2015	C3-PB
	Private	PMO Director	Jordanian	27 April 2015	C2-PB
	Private	Project Manager	Saudi	18 June 2015	C1-PB
<b>C</b>	Private	PMO Manager	Saudi	3 May 2015	C2-PC
	Private	Project Manager	Egyptian	21 May 2015	C1-PC
<b>D</b>	Public	PMO Director	Saudi	28 May 2015	C4-PD
	Public	Team Leader	Saudi	2 June 2015	C1-PD
	Public	Project Manager	Jordanian	22 June 2015	C3-PD
	Public	Project Engineer	Egyptian	7 May 2015	C2-PD

Table 5.1: Summary of interviews

It is obvious that the size of the sample selected for the research depends on the intention of the researcher. He or she can have a huge number of respondents with a massive, though possibly 'shallow' data set or a small number of respondents with in-depth investigation. For the sake of this study, the aim was to have 15 to 20 respondents answer an initial questionnaire and then be interviewed to make sure they had understood the questions in the way they were intended and encourage them to elaborate on all the key issues in the questionnaire. According to Lincoln and Guba (1985)

*'A dozen or so interviews, if properly selected, could exhaust most available information ... to conduct as many as twenty interviews will reach well beyond the point of information redundancy'.*

All the participants in this study answered the questionnaire (as seen in Appendices 1 and 2) with minimal assistance on the language used. Responding to the interviewees' request, when they were given the choice, the interviews were conducted in Arabic, rather than English. The reason for that was the increased level of comfort the participants enjoyed by being allowed to speak in their native language. During the interviews, the researcher (who is bilingual) noticed that the interviewees elaborated and gave examples and scenarios to extents that they would not do if they were speaking in English. Even though the interviews were conducted for the most part in Arabic, English was used for commonly used and technical phrases, as is the normal case in international business.

Before the start of the interviews, each single participant was asked if he would allow the researcher to record the interview on a voice recorder (smart phone). All participants agreed to the recording. Recording the interviews did not seem to have any abnormal effect on the participants, or make them uncomfortable. Recording interviews is a common practice and has been adopted by many researchers. It allows the researcher to concentrate on the discussions and not on taking notes.

The questionnaire on which the interviews were based was delivered to participants, at the first time of contact, before they were contacted again to set up interviews. All participants welcomed the idea and offered one hour of their time for the interviews.

## 5.5 VALIDITY AND RELIABILITY

Warwick and Linninger (1975) point out the need for researchers not only to capture data relevant to the purpose of the study but also to ensure the reliability and validity of the data. According to Yin (1994), three tests of validity and one test of reliability are needed to test the case study methodology. The tests are: construct validity, internal validity, external validity, and reliability.

**Construct validity** was defined by Brown (1996) as ‘*the degree to which a test measures what it claims, or purports, to be measuring*’, and is usually addressed during the data collection phase. Construct validity can be measured by an aggregation of proofs (Brown, 1996).

The case study approach has been criticized by some scholars. For example, Barratt et al. (2011) warn against the risk of selective bias taking place when adopting this approach. Yin (2009) warned about the possible insufficiency of rigour and its negative impact on construct validity. To understand the concept of rigour, it is useful to examine a list of threats to qualitative research, as identified by Maxwell (1992), and shown in Table 5.2, below.

No.	Aspect of research rigour	Threat to rigour
1.	<i>descriptive validity</i>	data recorded vs. data not recorded or ignored
2.	<i>interpretation validity</i>	effective interpretation of what happened
3.	<i>researcher bias</i>	neglecting particular theory or choosing not to interview persons
4.	<i>theory validity</i>	forcing data to match certain theories
5.	<i>reactivity</i>	what is being observed is a result of researchers being there

Table 5.2: Summary of aspect of research rigour and threats (source: Maxwell (1992))



Among the tactics used to establish construct validity is the use of multiple sources of evidence (Yin, 2009). To ensure a successful construct validity test, the researcher used multiple sources of data, such as questionnaire, interviews, observations, documentation, and personal experience of the researcher. The researcher tried, during the interviews, to dig deep in an attempt to answer the main research question.

**Internal validity**, which is usually dealt with the data analysis stage, refers to the conclusion drawn from a research as being valid for the participants taking part of the research. For example, internal validity *'describes the ability of the research design to unambiguously test the research hypothesis'* (Watt and van den Berg, 2002, p. 186).

**External validity** refers to the *'extent to which the results of a research study are able to be generalized confidently to a group larger than the group that participated in the study'* (Bracht and Glass, 1968)

**Reliability** can be simply tested by having another researcher follow the very same steps of another researcher on the same case study, and arrives to the very same results. In other words, conducting the same experiments, under the same conditions should lead to the same results (Yin, 2009).

According to Joppe (2000), reliability is

*'the extent to which results are consistent over time and an accurate representation of the total population under study is referred to as reliability and if the results of a study can be reproduced under a similar methodology, then the research instrument is considered to be reliable'*. (Joppe, 2000, p. 1)

Validity and reliability are two elements that any qualitative study should pay attention to during the design of the research (Patton, 2001). In contrast, scholars like Stenbacka (2001) tie reliability to measurements (i.e. to quantitative research) and therefore she considers the issue of reliability in qualitative research as irrelevant. Lincoln and Guba (1985) argue that

*'since there can be no validity without reliability, a demonstration of the former (validity) is sufficient to establish the latter (reliability)'. (Lincoln and Guba (1985, p. 316)*

## **5.6 ETHICAL ISSUES**

Ethics is always a concern during the conduct of the research. Researchers are responsible for taking care of the ethical issues by making certain that no unethical research practices were adopted during the study. The ethical conduct of individual researchers is under unprecedented critical observation (Best & Kahn, 2006). Here, the most important ethical issues are consent and confidentiality. Each one of the research interviewees should have freely consented to take part of the study, without any pressure or threat. For this study, verbal consent was obtained from the participants when they were contacted to ask for their participation. The confidentiality was guaranteed by giving verbal assurances that the identity of the participants will not be revealed and the data obtained during the interviews will not be shared with anyone outside the circle of this research.

## **5.7 QUESTIONNAIRE PILOTING**

De Vaus (1993, p. 54) advises *'do not take the risk, pilot test first'*. Pre-testing or piloting is important in making sure that a questionnaire is serving the purpose it is designed for. Questionnaire piloting helps in amending certain questions, in terms of language or content, if a need arises. The feedback from the chosen persons, who do the pre-testing, needs to be taken seriously.

The researcher decided to pre-test the questionnaire on two expert project managers, who have more than 15 years of experience working on different ICT projects, in Saudi Arabia. Both project managers understood the questions correctly. As there were no amendments needed to the questionnaire, the researcher decided to include these pilots in the main study.

## 5.8 TRANSCRIPTION

Transcribing the taped interviews to text is the next logical step in the process of data collection. Transcription is described by Green et al. (1997) as a 'representational process'. It represents 'talk, time, nonverbal actions, speaker/hearer relationships, physical orientation, multiple languages, translations' (Green et al., 1997). Transcription requires a translation or transformation of recordings to text (Duranti, 2007).

For this study, the recorded interviews were transferred to a personal computer, to make it easy to listen to. As described earlier on, the interviews were conducted in Arabic. Therefore, the researcher decided to have the interviews transcribed to Arabic and then translated into English. The researcher made sure that the Arabic transcriptions were word-for-word with the recorded interviews. All the words that came out of the mouths of the interviewees, including irrelevant information, were transcribed.

## 5.9 CODING

Coding - the process of organizing and grouping data - is an essential part of the data analysis process. As Strauss (1987, p. 27) points out that

*'the excellence of the research rests in large part on the excellence of the coding'.*

Creating codes can start at early stage, immediately after the setup of the main research question and before the data collection, and this technique is called 'pre-set coding'. Creating codes can also start during the reading and analysing of the data, and this is called 'emergent coding'. For most cases, and where possible, it is a good idea to adopt both. In other words, start coding the data at an early stage of the research and refine them as you go along.

In the present study the researcher has created a preliminary list of pre-set codes. The list was modified through the data collection stage, and with the expectation that it would change slightly during the data analysis stage. For the sake of accuracy and consistency, the researcher keeps a log book for the codes.

## 5.10 FRAMEWORK AND PROPOSITIONS

Based on the literature in *Chapters 1, 2, 3 and 4*, the next logical step is to propose a framework and generate a set of propositions that explain the impact of national culture on project management knowledge areas, as defined by the PMBoK guide.

### 5.10.1 Elements of the Framework

Models are simplified representations of complex realities. In the current framework, for the purpose of increased simplicity, some dimensions discussed earlier have been grouped. For the purpose of increased simplicity, Hofstede's dimensions, discussed earlier, have been grouped and reduced in number. In doing this reduction, the researcher followed the work of Anbari et al. (2009) and using this as a basis of a simplified framework, made some additional groupings and simplifications, as described in Figure 5.1, below. Thus, 'Individualism versus collectivism' was grouped under 'relationship between people', 'masculinity versus femininity, uncertainty avoidance, and power distance' were grouped under 'motivational orientation', and 'long-term versus short-term orientations' was grouped under 'attitudes toward time' (Anbari, et al. 2009, p. 2). The sixth dimension (indulgence/restrained) was not addressed by Anbari, but may be grouped under 'motivational orientation'. Based on the literature review, the proposed framework will be based on the next three categories:

1. '*Importance of relationships*'. This includes relationships between subordinates and superiors and between members of project team. In turn, the category deals with: communication, leadership, conflict resolution, and decision making
2. The '*perception of time*' by the project team and stakeholders, i.e. the importance of time in the successful delivery of the project. This will include: milestones, short/long-term success, and leisure time
3. Importance of '*motivational orientation*' in reducing the chances of project failure. This includes the adaptation of team members to circumstances and the job-keeping attitude even if disliked

Based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions, PMI knowledge areas and the literature review, a relationship between these elements is proposed, taking into account the proposed positive and negative influence of national culture on the project management knowledge areas. Figure 5.1, below, links these variables as a first step towards developing the framework.

The proposed framework and the propositions try to answer the research questions on whether the national culture impacts the functioning of the knowledge areas of the PMBoK on ICT projects. Furthermore, they also try to identify the cultural factors that impact the success or failure of projects, as well as highlight the challenges that project managers face during the implementation of the PMBoK practices and procedures.

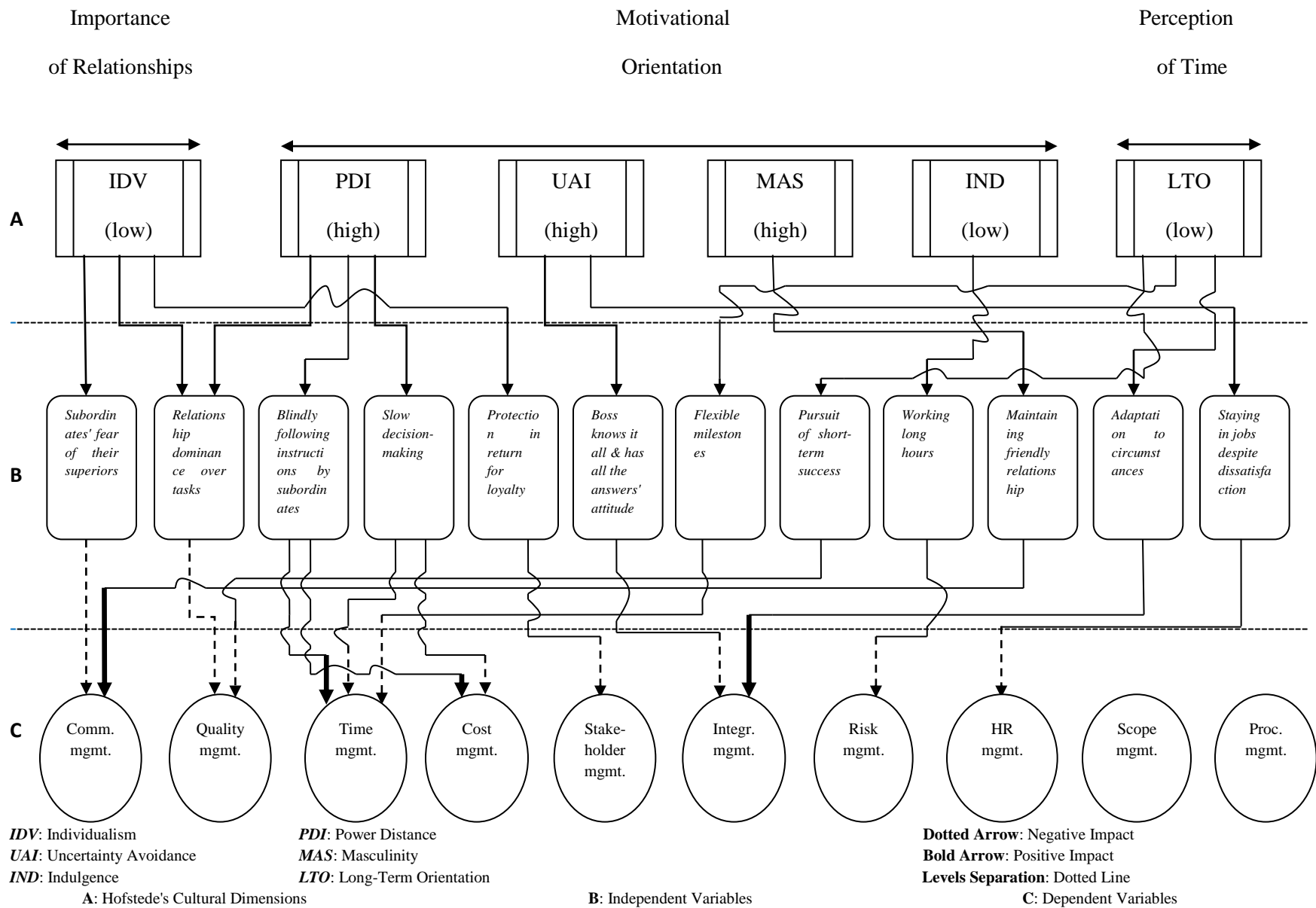


Figure 5.1: A model for impact of national culture on project management

### 5.10.2 The Generation of the Propositions

Based on the proposed relationships between the different elements of the framework, the following twelve propositions have been generated. The logic of each proposition is based on the literature related to it, as discussed in earlier sections. The propositions will be used for testing the relationships within the proposed framework. This will be done by populating the framework with empirical data collected as part of the research design. The propositions are:

**P1: The subordinates' fear of their superiors is negatively associated with effective communication management**

The literature review emphasizes on the importance of the relationship between the team members on one side and between subordinates and their superiors on the other side. A first proposition is that subordinates look at their bosses as people who have higher status and therefore they deserve to be respected and in some cases feared. This may apply to most individuals in collectivist cultures, where superiors exercise great power over their subordinates, threatening, in certain occasions, to terminate whoever challenges them. The bosses try to emphasize the difference in status between themselves and their subordinates. As a result of that, subordinates will lean towards avoiding open communication with their bosses, which in turn affect the project negatively.

**P2: The dominance of relationship over tasks is negatively associated with quality management**

The second proposition is that establishing and maintaining good relationships between subordinates and their superiors, in collectivist and high power distance cultures, is extremely important. In such cultures, the relationship between superiors and subordinates is considered as more important than doing the job or completing a task itself. This attitude impacts the quality of work, as incompetent workers are preferred over competent, based on good relationship with their superiors.

**P3: Blindly following instructions by subordinates is positively associated with time and cost management**

In high power distance cultures, where superiors are almost in full control of work, subordinates are expected to be told what to do, and to follow their bosses' orders, with no questions asked. This saves time and money, and plays towards the success of the project. This may be interpreted, by others, as a negative sign, as subordinates, in this case, are not allowed to challenge their bosses and to be creative.

**P4: Slow decision-making process is negatively associated with time and cost management**

In high power distance cultures, managers are seen as people with status and power, and therefore they are expected to make decisions without consulting with their subordinates. In most cases, these decisions represent their personal views and will be adopted by subordinates regardless whether these decisions makers are competent or not. Slow decision-making process will result in wasted time and money, of the project.

**P5: Protection of subordinates, by superiors, in return for loyalty, is negatively associated with stakeholder management**

In low individualism cultures where groups' interests prevail over individuals' interests, subordinates at work are expected to obey their bosses and to show their loyalty, in return for protection by their bosses. Such acts by the superiors will negatively impact stakeholder relationships as some of those who enjoy their bosses' protection, may be, considered as unqualified.

**P6: The attitude that the boss knows it all and has all the answers, is negatively associated with integration management**

Projects are normally managed by one person: the project manager. This is the case no matter what the culture is. In high uncertainty avoidance cultures, the project manager acts as an autocrat who controls all aspects of the project and expects his subordinates to have faith in his ability and to show absolute respect, as he is the one who has all the answers, all the times. This will negatively impact the project integration.



**P7: Flexible milestones is negatively associated with time management**

In certain cultures, 'time' is not considered an important element in the success or failure of the projects. In these cultures, deliverables can be postponed easily causing damage to the project. Short-term orientation cultures think of 'time' as uncontrollable. God and only God has control over 'time'. When milestones are missed or postponed, the whole project will be delayed and therefore unnecessary risks are introduced such as loss of reputation and damages in compensation for the project delays.

**P8: Pursuit of short-term success is negatively associated with quality management**

Looking for short-term results or success is one of the features of short-term orientation cultures. This attitude towards time leads to quick, incomplete results, and possible partial failure of the project. This of course will negatively impact the product and project quality.

**P9: Working long hours is negatively associated with effective risk management**

Taking time-off for relaxation and clearing the minds for employees, is as important as the work itself. Not taking advantage of the free time in relaxation and recharging the soul and the body of the employees, by travelling or practicing different kinds of sports, will have negative impact on the work. Work injuries and illness could be serious risks, in restrained cultures, where time-off, or vacation is not a priority.

**P10: Maintaining friendly relationships between workers positively impacts effective communication management**

In feminine cultures, employees establish and maintain friendly relationships between themselves. In such cultures, everything depends on favours and on how good personal relationships between the employees. There is a belief in these cultures that having caring relationships between the employees will get the job done smoothly and quickly. This will have positive impact on communication and integration of the project.

**P11: Fast adaptation of workers to changing circumstances is positively associated with integration management**

When working conditions change, organizations encourage and expect their employees to adapt to the new environment and keep up the good work. In short-term orientation cultures, employees lean towards adapting to the new conditions and absorb and deal with any negative outcome. This in turn works for the benefit of the project integration, and for the overall success of the product and project.

**P12: Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction is negatively associated with efficient human resources management**

Changing jobs, in societies with high uncertainty avoidance, seem to create fear and therefore is not considered a common practice. People in such societies prefer to keep their jobs despite their dissatisfaction. For managers, this is unhealthy situation. In this case, managers have to deal with workers who are willing to leave their jobs once they find what they are looking for somewhere else. The reason for the job dissatisfaction could be related to low salaries, bad treatment or any other reasons that are considered important for these workers. This has a negative impact on efficient human resource management.

### 5.10.3 Summary of Propositions

Table 5.3 below summarizes the propositions and relates them to the Hofstede's cultural dimensions.

Category	Independent Variable	Dependent Variable	Propositions	Related Cultural Dimension
Relationships between people	Subordinates' fear of their superiors	Communication management	<b>P1:</b> The subordinates' fear of their superiors is negatively associated with effective communication management	IDV (low)
	Relationship dominance	Quality management	<b>P2:</b> The dominance of relationship over tasks is	IDV (low) PDI (high)

	over tasks		negatively associated with quality management	
	Blindly following instructions by subordinates	Time and Cost management	<b>P3:</b> Blindly following instructions by subordinates is positively associated with time and cost management	PDI (high)
	Slow decision-making	Time and Cost management	<b>P4:</b> Slow decision-making process is negatively associated with time and cost management	PDI (high)
	Protection in return for loyalty	Stakeholder management	<b>P5:</b> Protection of subordinates, by superiors, in return for loyalty, is negatively associated with stakeholder management	IDV (low)
	Boss knows it all & has all answers' attitude	Integration management	<b>P6:</b> The attitude that the boss knows it all and has all the answers, is negatively associated with integration management	UAI (high)
Perception of time	Flexible milestones	Time management	<b>P7:</b> Flexible milestones is negatively associated with time management	LTO (low)
	Pursuit of short-term success	Quality management	<b>P8:</b> Pursuit of short-term success is negatively associated with quality management	LTO (low)
	Working long hours	Risk management	<b>P9:</b> Working long hours is negatively associated with effective risk management	IND (low)
Motivational orientation	Maintaining friendly relationship	Communication management	<b>P10:</b> Maintaining friendly relationships between workers positively impacts effective	MAS (low)

	<i>Adaptation to circumstances</i>	<i>Integration management</i>	<i>communication management</i>  <b>P11:</b> <i>Fast adaptation of workers to changing circumstances is positively associated with integration management</i>	<i>LTO (low)</i>
	<i>Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction</i>	<i>Human Resources management</i>	<b>P12:</b> <i>Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction is negatively associated with efficient human resources management</i>	<i>UAI (high)</i>

Table 5.3: Summary of propositions

### **Summary**

From these propositions a questionnaire was developed. Each proposition was tested to by complementary sub-proposition.

For example, Proposition1 (P1) is tested by Sub-proposition 1 (SP1) 'Subordinates are fearful of their superiors' and Sub-proposition 13 (SP13) 'Communication between different levels of management are very open and direct'. A full list of the sub-propositions is given in Appendix 2. The division of the propositions into sub-propositions was adopted (by the researcher) to avoid any confusion between the general statement and the consequences of adopting a certain behaviour.

## CHAPTER SIX: RESULTS AND ANALYSIS

### 6.1 INTRODUCTION

As discussed in *Chapter 5*, four organizations (three Private and one Public Sector) were included in the study, covering a total of 4 different ICT projects. In this chapter, the four projects are referred to as case study A, B, C, and D respectively. Based on the proposed framework (in *Chapter 5*) each project is examined for the cultural variables impacting project management implementation in KSA and based on the PMI project management knowledge areas mentioned in the PMBoK.

The three private sector organizations are based in Riyadh and undertake a wide range of ICT projects for both private and public customers. They have been in the Saudi market for more than 25 years, gaining excellent experience in the field of ICT projects. The fourth organization is one of the key government organizations in KSA. Based on the agreement between the researcher and the IT executives in this organization, the name and the details of the organization will be kept confidential. Specific quotations from the respondents are referenced by individual and project. For example, (C1-PA) refers to Candidate #1 in Project A. Details of the referencing system used during the interviews, for both individuals and projects, are included in *Table 5.1* in *section 5.4.3.1* in *Chapter 5*.

### 6.2 CASE STUDIES

#### 6.2.1 Case Study A

This organization is part of a group which was founded in 1979. It provides services in the fields of Telecommunications, Security & Control and Low Current. Examples of the services it provides are installation and maintenance of Very High Frequency (VHF)/ Ultra High Frequency (UHF) radio systems, jamming protection systems, microwave systems, Closed Circuit TV (CCTV), command and control centers, and public address systems.

This project consists of multi-solution platform to extend the communication signals to the uncovered areas. The planned duration is 12 months. According to the Project Manager:

*'The platform consists of several portable shelters accommodating the latest communication technology such as Global System for Mobile (GSM), Tetra, and Very Small Aperture Terminal (VSAT). It was a multi-million project which lasted for one and a half years and it was considered to be a success.'* (C3-PA)

### **6.2.2 Case Study B**

This organization was founded in 1987, with branches in Riyadh, Dubai, and Doha. It provides solutions in the Computer Aided Engineering (CAE), Enterprise Software Solutions (ESS), Public Services Solutions (PSS), and Enterprise Networking Solutions (ENS).

This project is a turnkey solution for the Equestrian Club in Riyadh. The planned duration is 18 months. According to the Project Manager:

*'The solution consists of a database and software applications to allow the entry, retrieval and display of the data on a large screen during the weekly horse race in the equestrian club, in Riyadh'.* (C1-PB)

### **6.2.3 Case Study C**

This organization has entered the KSA telecommunication market in 1989. It has 6 different area businesses, covering a wide range of applications, such as fibre networks, cellular networks, microwave systems, information technology, security services, power transmission and distribution, and telecom towers. The planned duration is 36 months.

According to the Project Manager:

*'This project consists of installing fibre cables and communications systems to secure a safe and reliable link between the 12 KSA ports, in the east and west, to the Ports General Administration, in Riyadh.'* (C1-PC)

#### 6.2.4 Case Study D

This organization is one of the key government organizations in KSA. It accommodates an IT department that runs all IT related business: both 'projectized' and 'operational'. It recently started adopting the project management approach in executing its projects. A PMO was established recently in the organization in an attempt to better manage the IT projects.

This project is about developing an application called 'the financial ambassador' which is part of the Enterprise Resource Planning (ERP) programme. The planned duration is 12 months. It includes applications to serve the government entities outside the kingdom in better manage their financial and administrative business. The programme is accessed from KSA cultural attachés, all over the world, via dedicated communication lines. The data is stored on servers located in Riyadh, KSA. According to the Program Director:

*'This program serves KSA cultural attachés all over the world, and will provide centralized financial and administrative system that will serve employees and the students who study abroad.'* (C4-PD)

#### 6.3 TESTING THE VARIABLES

The framework proposed in *Chapter 5* is based on a set of independent variables (derived from the Hofstede model) that will be subjected to testing for their association with a set of dependent variables (derived from the PMBoK knowledge areas). The questionnaire was designed to serve this purpose by drawing responses from 15 different ICT professionals representing project directors, project managers, team leaders, and engineers in four different organizations, in KSA.

The following five-point Likert scale was used to facilitate analysis of the data:

*Strongly Agree (SA)* – 1 point

*Agree (A)* – 2 points

*Neutral (N) – 3 points*

*Disagree (D) – 4 points*

*Strongly Disagree (SD) – 5 points*

### **6.3.1 Subordinates' Fear of Their Superiors**

The first proposition (*Subordinates' fear of their superiors is negatively associated with effective communication management*) in the questionnaire was designed to investigate the relationship between subordinates and their superiors. It is proposed that this relationship has a negative impact on one of the most important PMBoK knowledge area: *communication*. This proposition asks two questions: do subordinates fear their superiors? And how open and direct communication is between the boss and the project team?

The fact that the labour market in KSA (and the Gulf countries) is multi-national makes it different. For example, if the majority of an organization's employees are from one nationality, then it makes relationships, at least between the team members, easier, because they will have the same background and culture. In most cases in KSA the work force comes from different nationalities, and the assumption (but as yet unproved) is that the relationships between the team members within a project are not easy.

According to the Project Manager (C1-PA) of Project A, employees in large organizations, unlike those in smaller organizations, do not enjoy close relationships. He believed that the size and structure of the organization plays a role in having good or bad relationships between the boss and his team. He stated that:

*'I think how the company is structured will have effect on this topic [subordinates' fear of their superiors] ... For example, in small companies where the structure is not complicated, there is always a direct communication channel between subordinates and their superiors.'* (C1-PA)



The Team Leader (C2-PA) of Project A believed that superiors don't really fear their bosses, and what it seems 'fear' is actually 'respect'. In KSA it is expected to see subordinates respect their superiors at work. He explained that:

*'Subordinates are not always fearful ... It's more of respect than fear ... The subordinate respects his superior ... I believe there is little fear but not to the extent it impacts the project.'* (C2-PA)

One important issue came out of discussions with the Project Engineer (C3-PA) in Project A is that fearing the boss at work, and not being able to admit mistakes, by the team members, when they are made, can be catastrophic on the project and could cause delays, and probable failure. This Project Engineer told a story about fearing the boss and consequences he and his team ended up with:

*'It happened in my project that a team member made a mistake and tried to cover his mistake, instead of admitting it ... He ended up making more mistakes ... What happened is that individual conducted a site survey and based on that survey we did our design and also ordered the required material ... When he realized he made a mistake, he started doing changes to the design to go with his site survey ... So he ended up in a mess, and that's because of his fear of his project manager in case he discovers the mistake.'* (C3-PA)

The same Project Engineer also stated that:

*'I personally keep friendly relationship with my team and encourage discussions.'*  
(C3-PA)

One of the reasons for fearing the boss, at work, according to another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A, is the lack of an effective evaluation system in the organization. This leaves the future of these employees in the hands of the boss. He stated that:

*'In most companies they don't have good evaluation systems that truly reflect the work their employees do ... So if you have a bad relationship with him he will give a bad image about you ... This is a good reason for the subordinates to fear their superiors.'* (C4-PA)

A third Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A believed that the reason for fearing the boss is related to the decision-making power. He pointed out that the boss can take decisions that can make the life of his employees miserable, if he wants to. For example, he can transfer any of his team members to a different site as a punishment. He also added that:

*'It is obvious that this phenomenon [the fear of the boss] is there because there is decision-making involved from the superior that can impact the subordinate.'* (C5-PA)

When it comes to the fear of the boss, it differs from one team member to another. Some individuals have the courage to admit the mistakes they make, but the majority don't. This depends on their personalities. When this topic was discussed with the Technical Manager (C6-PA) in Project A, this is what he had to say:

*'It depends on the personality of the team member (the subordinate) and how confident this person is ... Some team members fear their boss(me) and some show respect ... The same thing applies to me ... I respect my boss but I don't fear him ... I always have a margin of 10% for making mistakes during the work ... I believe that people are not perfect and are allowed to make reasonable mistakes ... I can always go to my boss with no fear and tell him about the mistake I make.'* (C6-PA)

Fearing the boss at work has consequences on the project, as a whole. One obvious impact of this fear will be on the communication between the boss and his team. As a result of that, channels of communication will be limited and possibly closed, leaving the project at risk for not being able to deliver the needed information, by the team members, to the decision maker: the boss. This does not appear to be the case with this Team Leader (C2-PA) in Project A:

*'This is what we have here [open and direct communication] ... I can go and discuss project-related issues with my boss or the boss of my boss easily... No restrictions ... We have a system in place.'* (C2-PA)

According to the Project Engineer (C3-PA) of Project A, encouraging project managers and bosses, in general, to open up channels of communication with their team members can be very beneficial. Doing so definitely makes life easier for all team members, as he explained:

*'From my level and all the way down to the most junior member of the team, communication is open ... I always sit with the team and have open discussions with them ... The same thing applies when I try to reach my higher management ... It's open and direct.'* (C3-PA)

According to the Project Engineer (C4-PA) of Project A, even though project team members can communicate with one or two higher levels of management, reporting daily status, they are instructed to follow the chain of command procedure when communicating project-related issues. Bypassing one level of management may make relationships harder between the team members and the project manager. According to this Project Engineer:

*'Team members can't communicate any issue to the higher levels of management unless it's done through the boss (the PM) ...He is the point of contact ... The members of the team are not expected to bypass the PM ... This will create problems between the team members.'* (C4-PA)

The Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A believed that open and direct communication between the project team and one or two higher levels of management may be applied in certain situations, but it's not always the case. It may work against the individual who tries to bypass his boss and deliver information to the level of management above his direct boss, as he explained. He pointed out that:

*'Doors are open ... Sometimes the boss of my boss stops me in the corridor and asks me about a certain issue in the project ... So I have access to my boss and the boss of my boss easily ... Open and direct access to the boss makes me feel more comfortable ... But I can't bypass my boss ... Meaning it's ok if I pass a piece of information to the boss of my boss, for example, providing that this piece*

*of information reaches my boss first, so he's aware ...This open and direct communication is conditional, otherwise it will work against me.'* (C5-PA)

According to the Project Manager (C1-PB) of Project B, the idea of fear of the boss does not apply to the ICT industry. He believed that team members who work on ICT projects are usually competent. Competent employees don't fear their bosses, because there is nothing to fear about. He explained that:

*'They all work in a professional way and everything is documented which protect all parties against any accusations.'* (C1-PB)

When asked about communication within the team, the Project Manager commented that communication between different levels of management is very open and direct. This concurs with the statement of the PMO Director (C2-PB) of Project B. The PMO Director mentioned that he worked, in the past, for other companies where there was a procedure in place to control communication with the higher management. When it comes to fear of the boss, the PMO Director distinguished between Private and Public Sectors. As he explained, in the Private Sector this phenomenon does not exist because managers are certified and qualified enough to be in their positions, while it is a different story in the Public Sector because, and in most cases, project teams are forced to work under a manager who are not qualified.

According to the Managing Director (C3-PB) in Project B, the fear from the boss does not exist in the private sector, because each individual will have an appraisal at the end of the year. So if the employee does not do well he will be in trouble, the managing director added. He also pointed out that another reason for non-existence of the fear is because channels between the boss and the team are open, in addition to an evaluation system that guarantees fairness. He stated that:

*'The employee here is evaluated by 4 different people: his direct boss (the Team Leader), Project Manager, Director of Projects, and myself (the Managing Director) and we take the average of these 4 evaluations ... so there is no fear.'* (C3-PB)

The Managing Director also explained that the door of his office is open to everyone in the company and he listens to everyone. He is convinced that this open-door policy is one of the good things about his company.

*'While we are doing that we make sure that the direct boss is always informed before any employee discusses anything with the higher management.'* (C3-PB)

Project C's Project Manager (C1-PC) also believed that there are no reasons for the team to fear the boss. He explained that in his company they have a system in place and employees cannot be terminated easily. He further explained that Human Resources (HR) normally investigate the case of termination and make a decision. He mentioned that:

*'The fear [of the boss] is very limited but it does exist.'* (C1-PC)

When asked about communication between the PM and the team and within the team, both the Project Manager (C1-PC) and the PMO Manager (C2-PC) of Project C stated that communication channels are open and direct between the different levels of management. The PMO Manager believed that there is no fear of the boss but rather respect, especially if the boss has a strong personality (i.e. strong leader). Project D's Team Leader (C1-PD) stated that the fear from the boss exists in his organization. He explained that the team members, for example, fear the functional manager because the annual evaluation is in his hand.

*'I don't think there is a fear from the PM.'* (C1-PD)

According to the Team Leader (C1-PD), in the government projects communication between the PM and the higher management is not open and is indirect. He stated that open and direct communication only applies between the PM and his team.

According to the Project Engineer (C2-PD) of Project D, subordinates fear their superiors in the government sector projects by 90%. The other 10% are either have more power than their superiors (and he experienced this in some of his projects) or they don't care. He explained that this 10% is usually Saudi nationals. He explained that:

*'The fear of the superior is usually seen at the non-Saudi side of the subordinates.'* (C2-PD)

When asked about the impact of this phenomenon on communication, the Project Engineer (C2-PD) explained that communication is not open and definitely not direct, especially in the government projects. He gave this example:

*'During one of the conflicts between individuals within the team the HR Manager asked me not to have him in the cc in my emails to the project team even though he does not need to take any action ... he does not want to have any communication with the project manager and team even though there was an issue that he needed to be aware of.'* (C2-PD)

According to the Project D's Project Manager (C3-PD), subordinates don't fear their superiors. He stated that he did not feel that in his project. He explained that in KSA the economic situation makes or encourages employees not to hold tight to their jobs so they become afraid of the boss. People here work not as a result of fearing the boss, they work for achievement, as he put it. He also distinguished between nationalities when it comes to fearing the boss. He believed that in the case of the non-Saudi nationals there is kind of fear from the boss, while Saudi nationals show less fear from the boss.

Bureaucracy plays an important role in the government business, which prevents open and direct communication between the project manager and the different levels of higher management, as the Project Manager explained. To be able to communicate any issue in order to make a decision, you'll have to go through many stages, and it will take a lot of effort and is usually time consuming, as he explained. He gave the following example:

*'when we established the PMO at this ministry the amount of effort we put and the amount of resistance we faced for two years was unbelievable ... the communication between the different levels of management was a big challenge , but we succeeded at the end after we built the confidence between the PMO team and the different levels of management at the ministry ... we replaced their*

*long-time existing "ticketing system" with a project management techniques and procedures ... in other words we changed how they conduct their ICT business from being "operational" to "projects" using customized PMI methodology.'* (C3-PD)

The PMO Director (C4-PD) of Project D agreed with his Project Manager about the existence of the bureaucracy in the government sector. He believed that positions such as 'manager' and especially higher official positions are always looked at in a different way. They are looked at with fear. He believed that subordinates fear their superiors.

The PMO Director believed that, unlike the Private Sector, communication is not open and direct, especially between the PM and the higher management. He stated that:

*'It's more complicated here (in the government projects) ... compared to the private sector and this due to the nature of the government entities' hierarchy.'* (C4-PD)

### **Data Analysis**

For the sub-proposition '*subordinates are fearful of their superiors*', the results of the questionnaire, for both Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.1 and 6.2, respectively. In the Private Sector projects, there is tendency towards a disagreement with the sub-proposition concerning '*subordinates*' fear of their superiors'. A total of 54% registered 'Disagreement' and 'Strong Disagreement', versus a total of 46% for 'Agreement' and 'Strong Agreement'. The difference is relatively small. In the Public Sector projects, there is a clear agreement with the sub-proposition concerning '*subordinates*' fear of their superiors': a total of 75% registering 'Agreement' or 'Strong Agreement'.

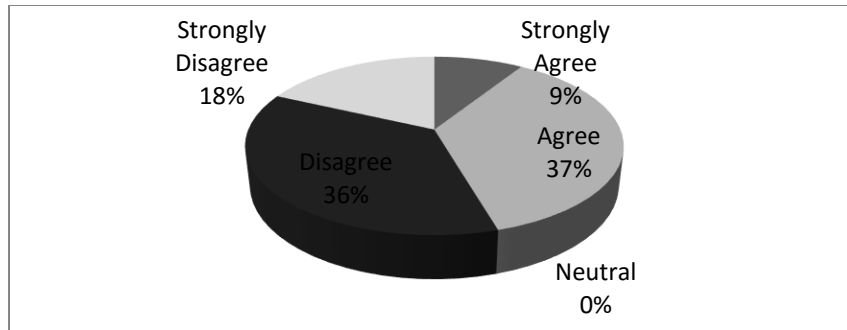


Figure 6.1: Subordinates fear of their superiors (**Private Sector**)

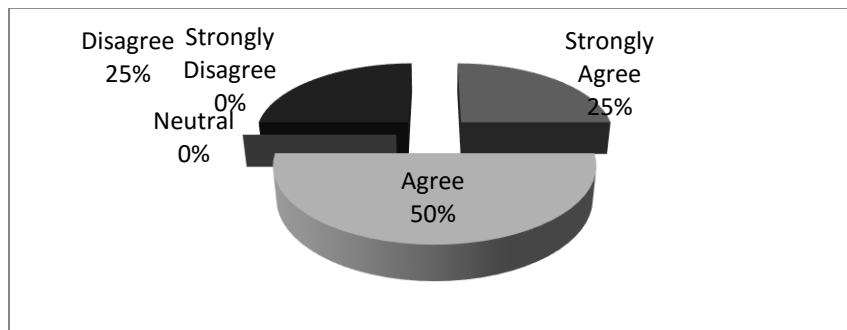


Figure 6.2: Subordinates fear of their superiors (**Public Sector**)

Taking into account the results above (54% against 46%), it can be concluded that in the Private Sector projects project team members tend to *respect* their bosses rather than *fearing* them. This is what a significant portion of the Private Sector's respondents agreed on. According to some respondents, the fear of the boss does not apply in the Private Sector ICT projects. They believed that there are no reasons for the ICT team to fear the boss, as this team is usually certified, qualified and considered to be competent. They also believe that only weak individuals or teams fear the boss to cover for their technical and managerial weakness, as in the Public Sector projects. Furthermore, they believed that, in most cases, project teams in the Public Sector projects are forced to work under unqualified managers, who are usually appointed for political reasons, which could be a reason for fearing these managers.

As discussed earlier, the project teams, in the Private Sector projects, in KSA, are formed from different nationalities, including Saudi. Having different cultural



backgrounds in a project makes relationships between project team members harder. What also plays a role in having difficult relationships within the project team is the size of the organization, according to some respondents in the Private Sector; the larger the size of the organization the harder the relationships become. In smaller organizations there is usually open and direct communication between the team members. This, based on the study responses, reduces the chance of fearing the boss.

As explained in the literature in *Chapters 2, 3 and 4*, the majority of Arabs are Muslims. In KSA, almost 100% of the nation is Muslim. This religious background explains the existence of 'respect' in all aspects of life, including project management. This is the nature of cultures with high Power Distance.

Some respondents in the Private Sector projects believe that subordinates do not fear their superiors because each team member will have an appraisal at the end of the year that guarantees a fair evaluation. Another reason for not fearing the boss in the Private Sector is the fact that employment cannot be terminated easily. Termination of employment cannot happen before a thorough investigation by the Human Resources department, and has to be based on a valid reason. This eases the pressure on the team members leaving them in a healthy work environment. Additionally, an 'open-door' policy, as one of the respondents pointed out, played a role in not fearing the boss.

One reason for fearing the boss, in the Private Sector projects, is 'decision-making power'. In high Power Distance cultures, like KSA, subordinates are convinced that their superiors have the power to punish them and make their lives miserable if they (subordinates) are not well connected. This keeps the team member on the edge of his seat, fearing that his boss might get rid of him any time. The same mentality exists in the superior's mind; he believes that he has the right to act based on his own judgment (without consultation) and get rid of an employee, no matter how valuable this employee is to the project, and mostly on personal reasons. This way of thinking exists in the Private Sector, as explained by one respondent. Another reason for fearing the boss, in Private Sector projects, is the lack of an 'effective evaluation system' in the organization.

Failing to admit mistakes by a team member, because of a fear of the boss can be damaging to the project, as explained by one respondent in the Private Sector. It could cost extra time and money to fix the mistake when it is discovered. In the Public Sector projects team members fear the Functional Manager. According to some respondents, the Functional Manager controls their annual evaluation, and therefore he is feared more than the Project Manager.

One of the Muslim and Saudi values, which is based on Islamic teachings, is respect: the respect of the young people to the older people, the children to the parents, and the students to the teachers. Aayas 23 and 24 from Surah Al-Esra in the holy Qura'an states:

وَقَضَىٰ رَبُّكَ أَلَّا تَعْبُدُوا إِلَّا إِيَّاهُ وَبِالْوَالِدَيْنِ إِحْسَانًا إِمَّا يَبْلُغَنَّ عِنْدَكَ الْكِبَرَ أَحَدُهُمَا أَوْ كِلَاهُمَا فَلَا تَقُلْ لَهُمَا آفٌ وَلَا تُنْهَرُهُمَا وَقُلْ لَهُمَا قَوْلًا كَرِيمًا ﴿٢٣﴾ وَاخْفِضْ لَهُمَا جَنَاحَ الذُّلِّ مِنَ الرَّحْمَةِ وَقُلْ رَبِّ ارْحَمْهُمَا كَمَا رَبَّيَّانِي صَغِيرًا ﴿٢٤﴾

These Aayas translate to:

*'Your lord has ordered you to worship none except him, and to be good to your parents. If either or both of them attain old age with you, do not say: 'fie on you', nor rebuke them, but speak to them with words of respect (23) and lower to them the wing of humbleness out of mercy and say: 'my lord, be merciful to them, as they raised me since I was little. (24)' (Aayas 23-24, Surah El-Esra, Holy Quran)*

As discussed in *Chapter 4*, KSA's score on the Power Distance Index is high, implying that subordinates look at their superiors as people with higher status and therefore they should be respected and may be feared. This is one of the features of the high Power Distance cultures. Based on Hofstede's (1980) classification, in such cultures superiors try to emphasize the difference in status between themselves and their subordinates. This may result in narrowing the communication channels between the subordinates and their superiors.

According to House and Mitchell (1974), the ideal leadership behaviour is best described as 'supportive leadership behaviours', and this usually the case when the leader is being friendly and considerate towards his subordinates in order to build trust and confidence within his project by encouraging discussions and maintaining communication channels open. This concurs with the Private Sector projects where relationships are easy, open and direct between the Project Manager and his team. According to some of the responses, in the Private Sector, the boss sits and eats with his team during the execution of the project, providing supportive leadership. In the case of the Public Sector projects the results of this study contrasts with House and Mitchell's (1974) leadership behaviour, as communication between the Project Manager and higher management is usually not easy. In fact, from the statements made by some respondents in the Public Sector projects, managers in KSA make their decisions 'autocratically and paternalistically' as observed by Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993).

According to one respondent, in the Public Sector about 90% of the team members' fear their bosses (the 10% who do not either have more power than their bosses or they don't care). The majority of the individuals who fear their bosses are non-Saudis. Saudi nationals show less fear. This is understandable due to the fact that non-Saudis are on work residence status, meaning they can be deported easily if someone (their boss, for example) files any complaint about them. This is enough for any of these expatriates to fear the boss. Saudi nationals show less fear of the boss, because they work in their own country and with their own people, and most likely they are protected through their extended families.

For the sub-proposition '*communications between different levels of management are very open and direct*', the results of the questionnaire, for Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.3 and 6.4 respectively. The charts below show that for the sub-proposition concerning 'open and direct communication', 'Agreement' and 'Strong Agreement' combined amounted to 82% in the Private Sector and 0% in the Public Sector, indicating a clear difference between the two sectors.

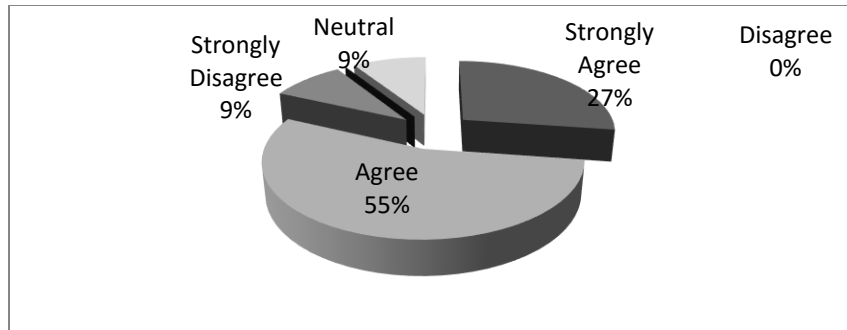


Figure 6.3: Open and direct communication (**Private Sector**)

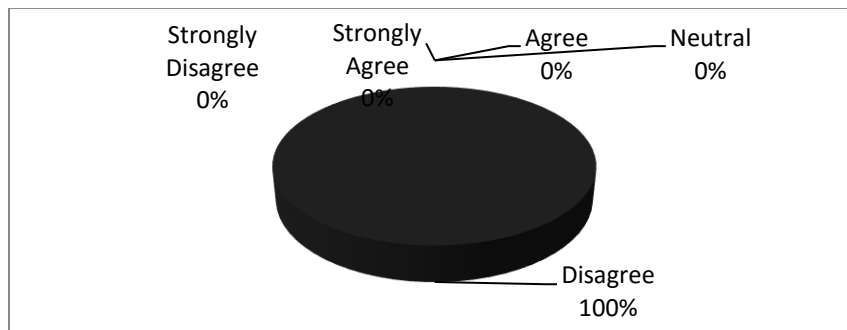


Figure 6.4: Open and direct communication (**Public Sector**)

*Communication* is one of the most important aspects of Project Management. One obvious consequence of fearing the boss at work is that channels of communication will be limited between the team members and the boss, leaving the project at risk. In the Private Sector projects, *communication* between the Project Manager and his team and between the Project Manager and the next level or two in the chain of command, is generally open and direct, as illustrated in Figure 6.3, above.

One of the outcomes of this study is that communication, in the Public Sector, between the PM and the team is open and direct. On the Other hand, communication between the PM and the higher management is far from being open and direct, as represented by Figure 6.4, above. The bureaucracy and hierarchical rules play a role in making communication harder between the different levels of management in any government business. In the Public Sector projects, the higher you go in the chain of command, the more complicated ‘communication’ becomes.

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following themes were identified:

- *Subordinates' respect of their superiors* (Private Sector)
- *Subordinates' fear of their superiors'* (Public Sector)

### **6.3.2 Relationship Dominance over Tasks**

The second proposition (*The dominance of relationship over tasks is negatively associated with quality management*) was intended to deal with the relationship between the boss and his team and between the members, and investigate how important this relationship is when it is weighed against the task itself. This proposition suggests two questions: how important this relationship is? And how does it impact the quality of the product? It is proposed that quality suffers as a result of the relationship dominance over work.

The Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA) acknowledged the importance of having good relationships with the team members, but he believed that it should not dominate the work. He argued that:

*'The nature of the work is what will force itself and not relationships ... The reality is that work is more important ... At the end we are here to work, and relationships need to stay outside the work.'* (C1-PA)

The same Project Manager is convinced that if relationships are becoming more important than work then:

*'The project will be negatively impacted.'* (C1-PA)

The Team Leader (C2-PA) in Project A values the good relationships within the team, but he has an interesting thought when he classified the task into major and minor, giving himself an excuse to risk the good relationship with the others if the task is minor.

*'It's preferred to have good relationship, but I would jeopardize my relationship with the team if the task is major, because relationship can be fixed later on. Relationship with the team should not be jeopardized for minor tasks.'* (C2-PA)

This Team Leader acknowledged that this attitude will impact the quality of the product.

*'Yes, as a result of that [relationship dominance over tasks] quality suffers.'* (C2-PA)

According to the Project Engineer (C4-PA) of Project A, everyone who has a relative or a member of the family or even a friend, at his work place, will make sure this person is well taken care of on the expense of the work. This in turn may result in producing work that does not meet the quality standard. He added that:

*'Usually a team member would satisfy his boss on the expense of work itself in return for polishing his images, by the boss, and possibly getting a raise.'* (C4-PA)

The Project Engineer (C3-PA) of Project A emphasized on the fact that work is more important than maintaining good relationship with the team, and he also believed that relationship needs to be separated from work.

*'We separate between work and relationship in our projects.'* (C3-PA)

Another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A believed that protecting relationships on the expense of work may lead to covering certain mistakes made by protected team members. This leads to having incompetent members within the team, which will contribute to the suffering of the product quality, according to this project engineer:

*'Quality suffers when this leads to covering mistakes made at work.'* (C4-PA)

Almost everybody in Project A agrees that keeping good relationships with the team are very important providing that they do not impact the work in a negative way. According to another Project Engineer (C5-PA):

*'If the relationship between the PM and his team is not good, the work will be negatively affected.'* (C5-PA)

The Technical Manager (C6-PA) in Project A also agreed that work is more important than having good relationships. He also acknowledged that quality of the product may be impacted as a result of favouring relationships over tasks when he added that:

*'At the end of the day work is our target, and this target can be best achieved by having good relationships.'* (C6-PA)

According to the Project B's Project Manager (C1-PB), deliverables are what it counts at the end of the day, while 'communication' as a concept is only a facilitator to do the job. He explained that:

*'It's always good to have good relationship to make the work easier.'* (C1-PB)

Quality is one of the project constraints that you can't afford to sacrifice, according to the Project Manager. It does not mean because the boss has good relationship with his team that he treats certain part of the project as if it's done when it's not, on the expense of the quality. He suggested that:

*'This will leave bad impression with the customer ... in our ICT projects we don't play the "hit and run" game.'* (C1-PB)

The PMO Director (C2-PB) in Project B believed that the dominance of relationship over tasks will have negative effect on the quality of the product. But he also believed that if the manager gets the support of the resources (as a result of that good relationship) he'll succeed.

The Managing Director (C3-PB) in Project B does not believe that quality will suffer as a result of the dominance of relationship over tasks, because as he explained there is an evaluation system being implemented in the company. Work will speak not the relationship with the boss, as he put it. He stated that:

*'So if you are working for one PM, today, and happens to have good relationship with him, tomorrow you'll be under a different PM ... all PMs are working towards achieving the project goal: being on time and on budget.'* (C3-PB)

As long as there is a system and procedure for conducting the work, relationships should not impact the work in a way that the cause quality to suffer, according to the Project Manager (C1-PC) in Project C. In reality, quality suffers when relationship is more important than work, and this is not the case in his work place, as he explained.

According to the Project C's PMO Manager (C2-PC), relationships are very important to make things move smoothly at work, but, as he explained, they give preferences based on the work productivity.

The Project D's Team Leader (C1-PD) believed that in an environment like KSA, relationships could be more important than work. Good relationships between the team members and between the PM and team makes the project move forward and makes it successful, according to the Team Leader. He agrees that the quality of the product will suffer as a result of the relationship preference over task.

The Project Engineer (C2-PD) in Project D does not agree with the Team Leader that relationship could be more important than the task. He explained that:

*'Relationship is important but it's not more important than the task.'* (C2-PD)

The Project Engineer believed that the relationship impacts the quality of work and the project as a whole. He also believed that in the government projects, quality is not something important (not a concern). In fact, the government never checks if the product was delivered with quality or not, and that's why the PMs deliver regardless of the quality, he added. He believed that the reason for that is that the government does not have qualified people who can receive and check if the product is within the standard or not. For example, in the official Request For Proposal (RFP) the management never state any specs of any item or component. They might ask them to build a call-center, for instance, with no specific specs of the routers or switches.



*'In such cases, how can they check if the quality is according to the spec or not?  
There is no auditing.'* (C2-PD)

The Project Manager (C3-PD) in Project D agreed that when the personal relationships dominate the work, the quality of the product and project overall suffers.

According to the PMO Director (C4-PD) in Project D, the relationship dominance, over tasks, is seen quite often in the Arab World in general and in KSA in particular and especially in government business. He stated that politics exists between the different departments in the government sectors, and as a result of that Arabs appease their bosses (higher management) on the expense of work. He confirmed that:

*'This is reality, and that's why in most cases you use this close relationship to get things done at work ... so personal relationships within the work environment are important to do your work and to get tasks accomplished.'* (C4-PD)

When there is a long and lasting personal relationship between the PM and the project team, the appeasement appears on the surface on the expense of project work, according to the PMO Director.

### **Data Analysis**

For the sub-proposition *'relationship between project manager and members of the project team is more important than the task itself'*, the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.5 and 6.6, respectively. The charts below show that the 'Disagreement' and 'Strong Disagreement' with the sub-proposition concerning 'relationship dominance over tasks' is 55% and 50% in the Private and Public Sector, respectively.

The fact that 18% of the Private Sector and 25% of the Public Sector respondents have registered 'Neutral' (in their responses) indicates a slight inclination towards a disagreement with the sub-proposition 'relationship dominance over tasks'.

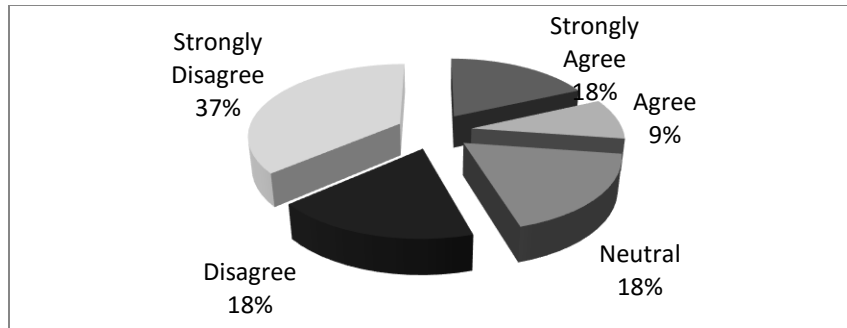


Figure 6.5: Relationship dominance over task (**Private Sector**)

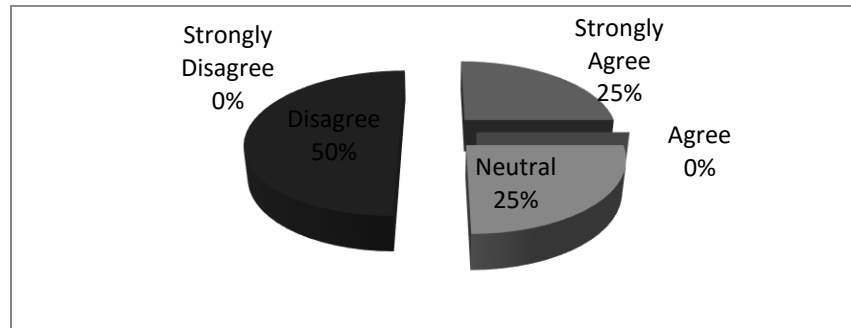


Figure 6.6: Relationship dominance over task (**Public Sector**)

Based on some of the responses, in the Private Sector projects, relationship is important but task is more important. It is essential to get the work done smoothly and having good relationships with the boss and the team helps achieve that. Respondents in the Private Sector believed that relationships should be kept outside work. When relationships dominate work, relatives and friends will be taken care of on the expense of work. When relationship becomes more important than work, incompetent people will be seen as part of the project teams, which makes the quality of the product suffer. Protecting relationships on the expense of work leads to covering the mistakes and carelessness by the relatives and friend in the team. Some respondents believed that relationship dominance over task in general makes product quality suffer.

For the sub-proposition '*quality of work produced suffers when relationships become more important than the work itself*' the results of the questionnaire, for the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.7 and 6.8, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement with the sub-proposition 'Quality suffering for

relationship dominance over task' is 91% to 100% in the Private and Public Sector projects, respectively, indicating a closely similar position for both.

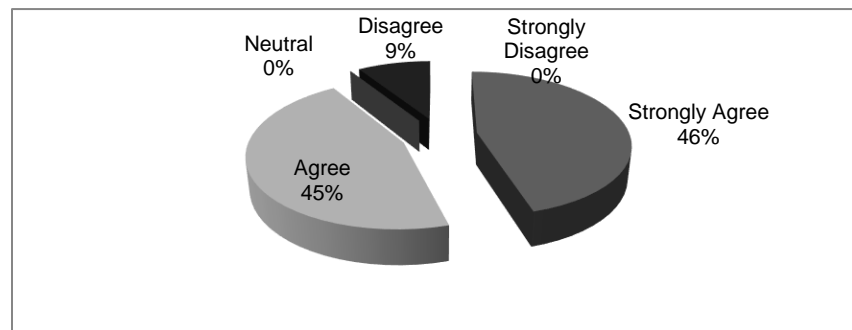


Figure 6.7: Quality suffering for relationship dominance over task (**Private Sector**)

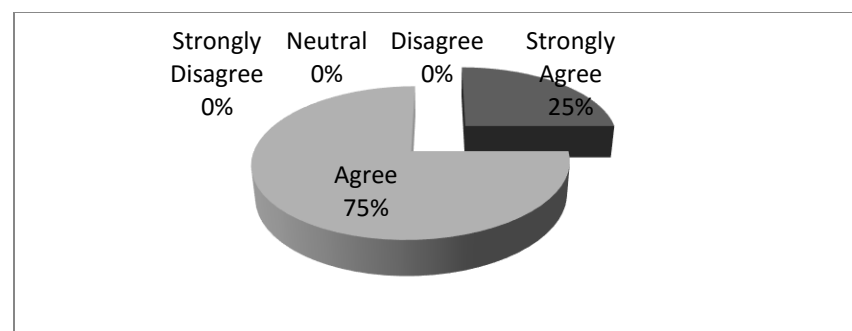


Figure 6.8: Quality suffering for relationship dominance over task (**Public Sector**)

Not all the respondents in the Private Sector share the same opinion about relationships and work. Some believe that even if the relationship dominates work, quality should not suffer because there is a proper evaluation system in place and it is implemented to make sure that what is being produced is up to the quality standards. They believe that work productivity is what it counts in the end, not relationships.

In the Public Sector, according to some of the ICT professionals interviewed relationships are more important than work. Unlike the Private Sector business, the Public Sector involves a lot of politics and bureaucracy. As a result, Arabs tend to appease their bosses (higher management) even at the expense of work efficiency or effectiveness.

In fact, in Public Sector projects, the quality of the product appears to be less of a concern. Relationships and propaganda are important to the degree that makes quality an 'empty phrase' according to the Project Manager (C3-PD). Good relationships are what make the project successful at the end, at least in the government officials' calculations. According to one of the respondents (C2-PD) the reason for not taking quality into account in the Public Sector is because there are no qualified and professional auditors that can receive and check if the product is according to the standards or not. The Public Sector professionals acknowledged that product quality can suffer when personal relationships dominate work.

It is believed that relations in collectivist cultures, like KSA, are very important and may impact work. Keeping work and relationships separate in collectivist and high Power Distance cultures is very hard, especially for nations like KSA due to the fact that people are living in tribal society. People at work are connected to each other either through extended families or through their belonging to certain group (religious or social). As discussed in the literature review, in *Chapter 4*, the culture in KSA is based on Arab traditions and Islamic teaching (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993). This too, aligns with the nature of the Collectivist and high Power Distance cultures.

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following theme was identified as important:

- *Task dominance over relationship* (Private and Public Sectors)

### **6.3.3 Blindly Following Instructions by Subordinates**

The third proposition (*Blindly following instructions by subordinates is positively associated with time and cost management*) was introduced to investigate how instructions are delivered, by superiors, to the project team and more important how these instructions are received by subordinates. This proposition is investigated by asking two questions: do subordinates receive instructions with no questions asked? And does following instructions blindly save time and money? It is proposed that following instructions blindly saves time and money.

The Project Manager of Project A (C1-PA) did not agree that instructions should be followed without questions asked. He believed that releasing instructions by the PM without allowing careful discussions can harm the project.

*'Discussing the task with your boss can make the execution easier instead of taking the instructions without thinking.'* (C1-PA)

The Project Manager also believed that any team will consist of individuals who care about the project and they have a sense of the instructions that will work and others who do not care and they will do what they are told, even if they know that these instructions will not work and could cause delays or harm the project.

*'In the team you find one person who has a feeling of what should be best done and another who believed that he is not there to think and he only follows instructions, so it depends from one person to another.'* (C1-PA)

This Project Manager is convinced that following instructions blindly does not save time and money. In fact, it creates delays and possible extra cost, he added. When asked about the consequences of taking instructions, without clarification, from the boss, he replied that:

*'In one occasion I gave certain instructions to a team member ... he took them and disappeared, then I discovered that he did not do what he was supposed to do and that was because he did not ask or clarify the instructions.'* (C1-PA)

During the meetings with the team, the Team Leader (C2-PA) in Project A discusses and asks questions, making sure that instructions are clear, especially if the project plan does not address certain issues that are possible to float on the surface, the project Team Leader explained. He added that:

*'It [following instructions blindly] does not always happen.'* (C2-PA)

The Team Leader explained that in the past and in certain occasions, they had individuals within the team who came up with solutions that never crossed their minds at

that time. He further explained that they adopted those solutions and proved to be the right choice. He added that:

*'We are flexible and always looking for creative solutions from our teams and we encourage discussions ... I am not sure if what we do is related to PM procedure but we (the team) work as one body.'* (C2-PA)

The Team Leader does not agree that following instructions blindly by subordinates saves time and money

*It [following instructions blindly] does not always save time and money* (C2-PA)

One Project Engineer (C3-PA) in Project A goes with the idea of listening and consulting with the team before giving any instructions for any task:

*'When I get instructions from my higher management to do something I always review and discuss these instructions.'* (C3-PA)

He explained that when he gives his team instructions he expects them to ask questions and clarify things before execution. During his weekly meeting with the team he puts ideas on the table for discussions and he occasionally gets better ideas or solutions that could save time and possibly money as well.

When he was asked to give an example, he answered that:

*'In one of the projects we had laid down ducts pipes ready to pull fibre cables and the cables were rigid ... one of the team members drew my attention to the fact that we needed flexible pipes to accommodate these rigid fibre cables, and he was right ... it just did not cross my mind at that time and we adopted his idea ... he saved me because we were at the start of the project could have been a big issue if we did not catch the mistake at the start.'* (C3-PA)

This Project Engineer believed that following instructions without questions asked could, at a later stage, cost big time and big money.

However, another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A was convinced that instructions are followed with no questions asked because supervisors would not give a chance for discussions. He commented that:

*'Supervisors ask their team members to just follow instructions because they (the supervisors) know better.'* (C4-PA)

According to this Project Engineer the consequences of such behaviour can be costly if it turned out that the PM's instructions were not correct or not efficient during the implementation (as a result of not allowing the team to speak out). He explained that:

*'In this case the work will have to be re-done which extra time and money will be spent.'* (C4-PA)

According to another Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A, two opinions are better than one and three are better than two. He explained that he sometimes sends the team to do the work and they get back to him with unexpected ideas on how to execute certain tasks. He stated that:

*'I accept that because I trust my team ... I expect them to be creative and I always give them enough space to do the job.'* (C5-PA)

Following instructions blindly may save time but money may be lost at the end, as the same engineer explained this with the following example:

*'If you are installing a microwave system and your team reported to you that they'll need an additional component like a switch to make sure the system will function properly and you told them to forget about that and just deliver because you're running out of time ... in this case you will start seeing the problems after you get the system up and running.'* (C5-PA)

To the Project A's Technical Manager (C6-PA), following instructions blindly sounds too much like military orders, where soldiers do what they are asked to do then ask questions. In disagreeing with this approach he stated that:

*'The team needs to understand before they execute any task because sometimes you get a comment or a solution from one of the team members that could be the correct approach/solution to a certain issue.'* (C6-PA)

According to this Technical Manager, sometimes if the manager has a strong personality and he asks the team to just follow instructions with no questions asked they will do that, but the consequences may impact the project.

*'It could make you lose time and money with the assumption that you (the PM) has made the correct decision (technical and management wise), yes no questions asked by the team and only doing the work will save you time and money Otherwise you lose time and money if the scenario is the other way around.'* (C6-PA)

According to the Project Manager (C1-PB) of project B, this does not work in ICT projects. Instructions can't just be followed without any questions. He commented that:

*'Otherwise a gap will exist between understanding and expectation.'* (C1-PB)

The Project Manager does not believe that following instructions blindly will save time and money. For example, the consequences of giving unclear instructions on how to execute a certain task could cause a certain defect and the change that will occur later on will imply extra time and effort during the maintenance stage, according to the Project Manager.

When asked about the existence of this phenomenon in his company, the PMO Director (C2-PB) of Project B commented that it depends on the team and the nature of the project. He noted that:

*'Sometimes the members are only executors ... sometimes the PM is well educated and knows where he is going.'* (C2-PB)

The PMO Director does not believe that following instructions blindly saves time and money. It's not applied in reality where you give a task and the team follows the instructions with no questions, he explained. He stated that he agrees with the idea of



having the team discusses the task so they understand what they are doing before they are executing the job. He believed this saves me time and money in the future, and will make the individual or the team professional enough to handle any situation without referring back to his manager. He stated:

*'I believe it's a benefit for the project especially in the software industry and particularly for the programmer where he has to have logic moving from one step to another during the writing of the programme.'* (C2-PB)

Usually in the private sector the feeling for responsibility and accountability is there, as the managing director put it. Following instructions blindly does not save time and it does not save money, especially after taking the wrong direction (as a result of not clarifying the instructions, according to the Project B's Managing Director (C3-PB). In fact, this adds extra cost and time. So the team member will always ask the questions he needs answers on and clarify the sticky points before he starts the project.

*'The team members go down to the smallest detail possible and sometimes clashes happen because of that between the PM and his team.'* (C3-PB)

According to the Project Manager (C1-PC) of Project C, assuming that the PM is capable and competent, taking instructions without questions asked will save the project time and money. The Project C's PMO Manager (C2-PC) believed that his teams usually ask questions and clarify instructions. He also believed that his appointed PMs are capable and competent and have the ability to make decisions. He stated that:

*'I'll never assign a PM with no brain ... he is expected to have good judgment ... he should discuss and ask questions when I give him certain instructions.'* (C2-PC)

The PMO Manager assumes that the questions the team asks are to clarify instruction. If an individual wants to ask and discuss the core of the task, then he will be wasting time and money, as explained by the PMO Manager. He added that they, in their company, do the work based on PMI standards and lessons learned from their

experience. In this case, as he put it, taking instructions without questions asked, will save time and money.

The Team Leader (C1-PD) of Project D believed there should be direct discussions between the PM and the project team. In IT projects it is difficult to just give instructions and don't allow discussions or questions from the team, as he explained. These discussions are very important because the team members usually have deeper technical knowledge than the PM. He stated that:

*'I expect the individuals in the team to suggest better ways of executing the tasks.'* (C1-PD)

When asked if this policy saves time and money, the Team Leader pointed out that as a result of allowing thorough discussions within the team, the PM becomes aware of any possible risks, eliminating the possibility of having to fix mistakes as a result of unclear instructions, which will cost extra time and money.

The Project Engineer (C2-PD) of Project D stated that in some cases when the boss allows discussions and questions within his team, it is looked at as if the boss is being questioned or being weak. He explained that it should not be looked at this way. It is to make sure the instructions are understood well, otherwise there will be problems later on. He explained that he always prefers written instructions, so they are documented to avoid future arguments and misunderstandings of what, when and how to execute tasks. He added that:

*'We allow discussions if there is any concern or if there are unclear points that need further explanations.'* (C2-PD)

The Project D's Project Manager (C3-PD) believed he has no issue with this as he allows discussions with and within his team before the execution of any task. When asked about the consequences of not allowing his team to clarify project related instructions, the Project Manager stated that most likely that the team members who don't ask questions are the ones who don't understand what's going on with the tasks. According to the Project Manager, although instructions are written down still some

details are not written and it is the PM's responsibility to make sure the team understands them. He stated that:

*'I think if they just follow instructions with no questions asked this will save time and money for the time being but later when the mistakes appear the cost of fixing them will be costly and time and effort consuming.'* (C3-PD)

According to the PMO Director (C4-PD) of Project D, his teams do ask and clarify some instructions. Most likely that at the end the manager will get them to do what he thinks is right after he listens to them, according to the PMO Director. Sometimes having discussions on every single detail in the plan will definitely waste time, as the PMO Director explained. Therefore, PMs don't need to open discussions and have meetings on something that they have already tried and worked on in the past. Because this will be a waste of time and may be money as well. He suggested that:

*'It is recommended to open discussions on new tasks and when you need opinions on.'* (C4-PD)

### **Data Analysis**

For the sub-proposition *'instructions by supervisors are followed without questions'*, the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.9 and 6.10, respectively. The charts below show that 73% and 100% of Private and Public Sector respondents, respectively, were in 'Disagreement' or 'Strong Disagreement' with the sub-proposition thus indicating clear positions for both sectors.

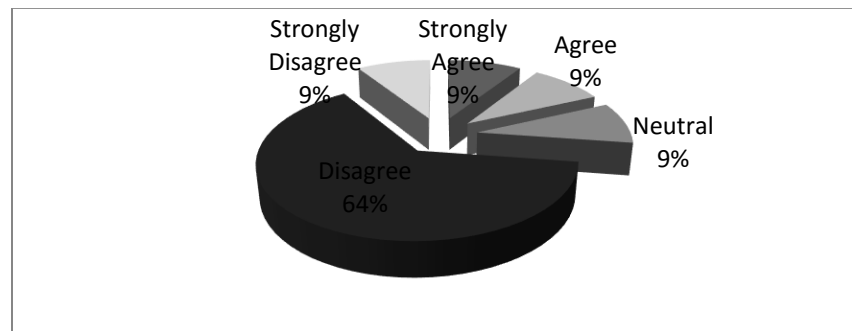


Figure 6.9: Blindly following instructions by subordinates (**Private Sector**)

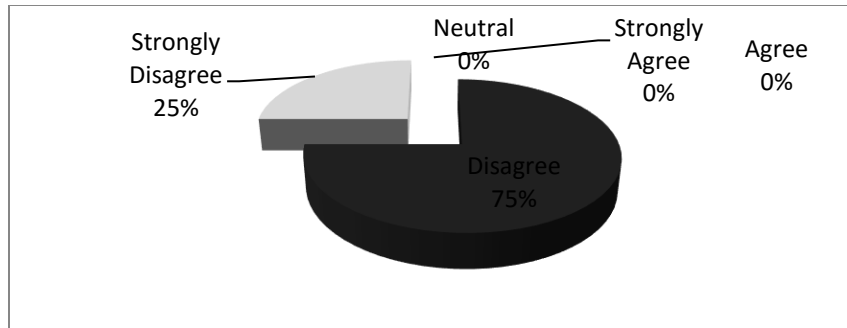


Figure 6.10: Blindly following instructions by subordinates (**Public Sector**)

The reason for the registered high disagreement, for both Private and Public sectors with the sub-proposition regarding 'blindly following instructions by subordinates' is the fact that the idea of taking the boss' instructions with no questions asked might work in other industries (like construction), but not in the ICT industry. The reason for that is IT professional like developers and software engineers follow certain logic in their software writing procedure, and following instructions blindly will get them nowhere and probably creates chaos and cause delays because there will be a gap between expectation and reality. In the IT industry, software developers have to have clear and straightforward instructions, otherwise the project will be delayed causing extra cost as well. So, in the Private Sector, this contradicts the proposition that subordinates follow instructions with no questions asked as a result of their recognition of the superiors' level of power and status. This also contradicts the proposition that this attitude saves time and money. Some respondents, in the Private Sector, pointed out that they have weekly meetings for the team and the chance is always there to any team member to ask and clarify instructions.

In the Private Sector projects, the majority of the responses on whether following instructions blindly saves time and money, indicated that it does not save time and money. The comments made by the Private Sector respondents made it clear that it actually adds extra cost and causes delays to the project at a later stage during the maintenance phase. One very important benefit from having open discussions with the team is, and it happened in different occasions, based on some respondents, that certain team members suggested solutions that never crossed their mind and saved the project big time and big money.

In some cases, as explained by some Private Sector respondents, asking questions is not encouraged especially if the individual who asks question is trying to discuss the core of the task. Because, as was put by one respondent, they plan and execute their projects based on the PMI standards, and therefore there is no need to waste time and money discussing standards. In other cases, project managers or even team leaders force their teams to just follow instructions with no questions asked.

Interestingly, according to one respondent in the Private Sector, following instructions blindly saves time and money if and only if the project manager is 100% capable, competent and he knows where he is going. In this case having discussions is a waste of time. In general, the majority of the respondents encourage discussions within the team and would not expect the team to take instructions blindly, which does not go with the expectation from a culture of a high Power Distance, at least in the Private Sector.

The respondents in the Public Sector projects gave a fairly interesting view. One of the Public Sector interviewees said that project managers don't need open discussions and meetings on issues already tried and discussed and proven to be the correct solutions. Discussions need to be opened on new tasks and on issues where opinions are, otherwise time will be wasted and possibly money as well.

Most of the Public Sector respondents indicated that discussions are encouraged within the team, as they are needed to clarify instructions. If instructions were followed blindly, time and money would be saved for the time being, but when mistakes came to the surface, the cost of fixing them would probably be high. An interesting point was made by one Public Sector respondent, namely that the team members who do not ask questions and clarify instructions during the weekly meetings are the ones who know nothing and usually don't know what is going on with the project, and they are classified as 'executers'.

For the sub-proposition *'following instructions, by project team, without questions asked, saves time and money'* the results of the questionnaire, for the Private and Public Sectors are shown in Figure 6.11 and 6.12, respectively. The charts below show that the Disagreement and Strong Disagreement to the sub-proposition registered 64% and

100% in the Private and Public Sectors, respectively, indicating clear positions for both sectors.

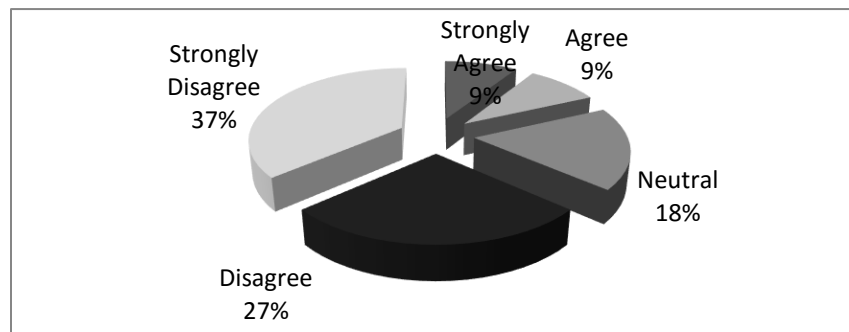


Figure 6.11: Saving time and money for following instructions blindly (**Private Sector**)

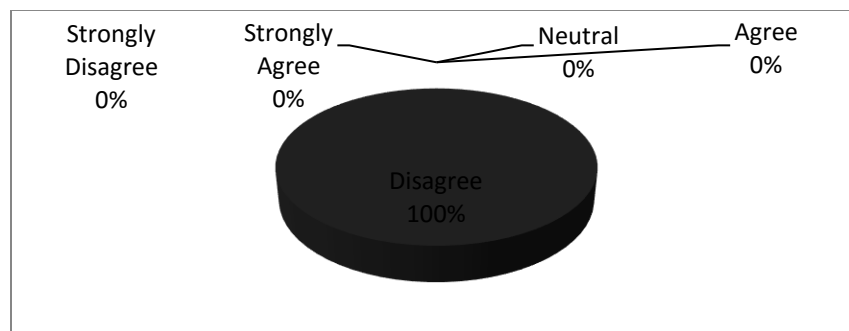


Figure 6.12: Saving time and money for following instructions blindly (**Public Sector**)

The moderate high disagreement with this sub-proposition in the case of the Private Sector and the total disagreement in the case of the Public Sector clearly demonstrates that following instructions blindly is far from being a policy in ICT projects.

Overall, subordinates follow instructions of their superiors, according to Bochner and Hesketh (1994), but they can't follow them without clarifying the instructions in a very small detail, especially in the IT projects. This suggests that Fedor and Werther (1995) were not correct when they stated that subordinates may accept autocratic or paternalistic behaviour as a way of exercising the leadership. This result, for both Private and Public Sector projects, contradicts Hofstede's (1984) conclusion that in high Power Distance cultures, subordinates depend heavily on their superiors.

The idea that some bosses act as if they have the answers and solutions to all the project related issues, goes with the high Power Distance cultures, like KSA. According to Hofstede (1980) these cultures recognize the 'high level of inequality of power in the society'.

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following theme was identified as important:

- *Carefully following instructions after clarification* (Private and Public Sectors)

#### **6.3.4 Slow Decision-Making**

The forth proposition (*Slow decision-making process is negatively associated with time and cost management*) was introduced to investigate how decisions are made, at what level, and the impact of the slow decision making process on the time and cost of the project. This proposition is tackled by asking two questions: *are decisions made slowly? And does that cost extra time and money?* It is proposed that decisions are made slowly, and this slow decision making process is negatively impacting the time and cost management.

According to the Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA), this can't be generalized because it depends on the task, the kind of decision and the situation itself. The same decision maker makes quick and slow decisions in different situations. But there are certain situations where the manager needs to take quick decisions. When he was asked to provide an example of such situations, he replied that:

*'Part of one of my projects was to design shelters (portable communication workshops) ... part of the new requirements (which was added at a later stage by the customer) is to change their sizes ... the decision to do that was taken slowly and impacted the project ... the change request came from the customer, but the decision to proceed with the change was taken by the service provider (us) ...decisions on some other change requests could be made on the spot (immediately).'* (C1-PA)

The decisions are not always made slowly, according to the Team Leader (C2-PA) of Project A. He believed that if the issue is clear then a decision will be made in one second. If it is not and it depends on other people and it could impact milestones, and the project in general, in this case the decision is made slowly. He added that:

*'If the decision is made slowly it will be because of the customer or the end user not because of us (supplier).'* (C2-PA)

The Team Leader also believed that making decisions depends on the PM and his experience and on the nature of the decision. He explained that:

*'For example if it's related to finance then you need to think more and probably raise it to a higher level for a decision ...if it's related to technical issues then decision is usually made faster.'* (C2-PA)

One Project Engineer (C3-PA) in Project A argued that there are certain decisions where he needs to take immediately because they are related to VIPs.

*'Decisions are needed to be considered and taken carefully even if they take time and seem to be slow.'* (C3-PA)

According to this Project Engineer, in certain occasions he needed to be proactive to overcome the slow decision-making process. He gave the following example:

*'When I request a certain material from the procurement department and they take their time because they are busy or may be looking for better deals ... in this case money and time are wasted ... so to save time and probably money I always try to use one of the team members to go to the market and get me 3 best prices (quotes) and I submit them to the procurement department ... this saves my project time.'* (C3-PA)

Another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A argued that decisions are usually made very slowly, mostly because the PM is weak and does not have trust in him-self to take decisions that he can be held accountable for. He explained that:



*'That's why whatever he wants to take decisions on takes long time due to his technical weakness ... In this case he would like to see someone else in the higher management take the decision for him and that's why decisions in some cases take long time.'* (C4-PA)

A third Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A believed that if decisions are not considered slowly then problems could result from these decisions. This contradicts his colleagues as he thinks that time should be taken to get the correct decision. He added that:

*'Slow decision making is a positive thing ... as long as I have the time I can take decisions after a thorough thinking.'* (C5-PA)

When asked about the impact of slow decision making on the project, he replied that:

*'I need to take my time to decide on the project related issues and I don't see this as a problem.'* (C5-PA)

What the decision is about, how it impacts the project and if it is within the responsibility of the manager are all factors that affect the decision making process, according to the Project A's Technical Manager (C6-PA). He agreed that slow decision process could impact time and cost, negatively. He added:

*'If the impact of the decision is low then the speed that the decision is taken can be high.'* (C6-PA)

He explained how going through different levels of management can result in getting different levels of speed in decision-taking:

*'For example, let's assume that the supervisor can take a decision within a limited budget of SR5K ... if he is supposed to take a decision within his limit then he can take it fast ... if the decision exceeds his limit (say SR50K) then the PM needs to approve it and if it exceeds SR200K then it will need the Director's approval and so on.'* (C6-PA)

According to the Project B's Project Manager (C1-PB), decisions are made slowly because of the bureaucratic route that usually follows and that's what happens especially when the individual doesn't have the authority to take decisions at a certain level. He stated that in some cases decisions are made fast and this depends on the maturity of the organization where the authorized entity within the organization understands that if the decisions are made slowly it will negatively impact the whole organization and the business.

Both the PMO Director (C2-PB) and Managing Director (C3-PB), in Project B, agree with the Project Manager (C1-PB) that a slow decision making process costs extra time and money. According to the Managing Director, in the private sector time is money. He gave the following example:

*'If the duration of the project is six months ... we provide the PM with a programmer for two months and a system analyst for one month ... so the decisions to project related issues have to be taken fast.'* (C3-PB)

He explained that in each project they usually plan and define the response time for the key people in the project. For example, a system analyst needs to respond to critical emails no later than 3 hours, so they don't lose time waiting for decisions. He mentioned that:

*'In general decisions are taken fast.'* (C3-PB)

According to the Project C's Project Manager (C1-PC), for big projects that usually last for long time (few months to few years) and have many parties involved, decisions are made slowly, while for small and short time projects decisions are made fast. He believed that slow decision making could introduce extra delays and cost to the project.

In their company, employees have direct access to the GM any time to discuss project issues, as explained by the PMO Manager (C2-PC) in Project C. He explained that:

*'That's why we get decisions made quickly.'* (C2-PC)

According to the PMO Manager, the slow decisions are usually taken at the levels higher than the PMO manager. Sometimes it is very wise for the manager to take his time in making the decision. He mentioned this example:

*'We request a sub-contractor to execute a certain task and he was the only one who does this kind of task and I was in a hurry to get the task done ... so this sub-contractor asked for double price and since I didn't have a choice and being in a hurry I signed the P.O. and asked my manager to sign it but he asked me to wait ... I was worried in case I delay the project, but he assured me that putting pressure on the sub-contractor will bring the price to the normal range and that what happened ... he was slow in his decision and worked out for our benefit ... but it does not always end up a success story.'* (C2-PC)

Politics and bureaucracy play important roles in the public sector projects, according to the Team Leader (C1-PD) of Project D. He believed that decisions at higher levels (above PM) are usually very slow, while within the project team decisions are made faster. According to the Team Leader, sometimes it is acceptable if the decisions are taking longer than expected. Because, as the Team Leader explained, there are certain decisions that need special considerations. He stated that:

*'In general slow decisions (made at top level management) affect the project.'* (C1-PD)

According to the Project Engineer (C2-PD) in Project D, the project team (including the PM) can't isolate themselves from the higher management. Meaning that if a decision is made very slowly by the higher management the project will be directly impacted. The Project Engineer explained that where ever there are contractors, sub-contractors, government, and project team, the different parties will take their time before they make decisions, especially when money is involved. He mentioned that:

*'Usually decisions from the government entities (customer) and from the contractor (private in some cases) are made slowly.'* (C2-PD)

The slow decision making process is related to different factors, according to the Project D's Project Manager (C3-PD). Usually organizations have a process for decision making and when this process does not exist, the manager will have to depend on himself in making the decision, as he explained. So in the government projects decisions are made slowly because no one is willing to take responsibility for the decisions and that's why it takes long time. He stated that:

*'In the government projects you'll always see committees formed to make decisions and to avoid responsibilities.'* (C3-PD)

The Project Manager acknowledges that this slow decision making process will add extra time and cost to the project.

The PMO Director (C4-PD) in Project D believed that slow decision making process do exist more in the public than in the private sector, and is considered one major difference between private and public project. He gave the following example:

*'After the project is completed and for us to get approval to get the service published, the decision from the top management takes long time (approx.. 2 months), while the project itself could be very small that last for 1 or 2 months.'* (C4-PD)

The PMO Director explained that his projects and the related decisions are connected to the Attachés. His government entity controls tens of Attachés all over the world. His job is to serve these Attachés as part of this government entity he is working for. He mentioned that after developing web sites, for example, for these Attachés and when he needs feedback on these web sites, he will have to write official letters to his manager and then these letters will be forwarded to the higher management then to the Ambassador then to the Attachés before they provide their feed-back in official letters. He commented that:

*'You can imagine how long it will take to take decisions in the government sector ... some of these Attachés are as big as ministries which adds more complexity to the process.'* (C4-PD)

## Data Analysis

Based on studies by Hofstede (1984), in High Power Distance cultures, like KSA, managers are looked upon as people with high power and status, which means they can make decisions without going back to their subordinates. It was proposed that superiors make decisions slowly which impacts the projects by adding delays and overhead cost.

For the sub-proposition '*decisions are made very slowly*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figure 6.13 and 6.14, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition concerning 'Slow decision-making process' is 36% and 50% for the Private and Public Sectors, respectively. Thus the situation for the Private Sector is not clear-cut, with a fairly even return on the categories and 37% returning 'Neutral'. By contrast, in the case of the Public Sector all respondents either agreed or strongly agreed with the proposition.

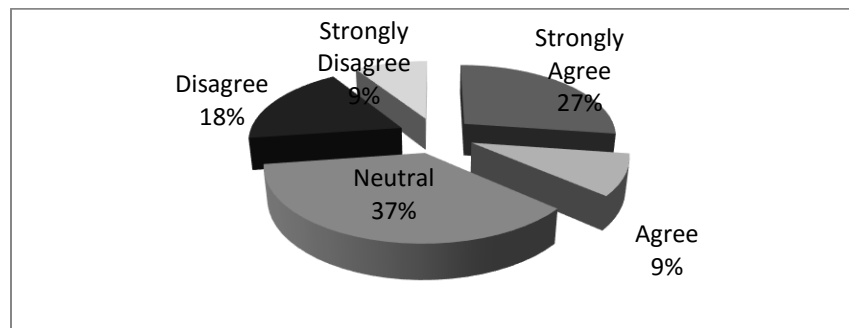


Figure 6.13: Slow decision-making process (**Private Sector**)

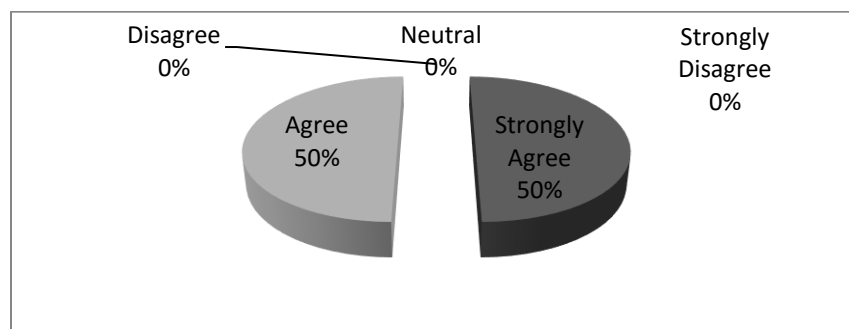


Figure 6.14: Slow decision-making process (**Public Sector**)

In the case of the Private Sector, the result may be due to the fact that decisions are usually made at the levels above the project manager, adding extra delays. Another reason, according to one of the respondents in the Private Sector, is because of the boss' technical weakness: weak managers have no self-confidence and can't take decisions that they will be held accountable for. As a result, these managers, according to this respondent, always try to get someone from the higher management to make decisions for them, and this usually takes time. The speed of decision making process varies as we go through different levels of management. The higher in the management chain the decision goes the longer it takes. Another reason for slow decisions, in the Private Sector, is when the decision is related to money. If the decision is related to technical issues that don't involve extra cost, decisions are usually relatively fast. One more reason for the slow decisions, in the Private Sector, is because of the bureaucratic system that most companies have, especially if the project manager does not have the authority to take decisions at a particular level.

Not all respondents in the Private Sector concur with the feelings about a 'slow decision-making process'. For example, one respondent was in favour of slow decision making, believing that if decisions are not considered carefully, the project will be impacted. To him, a slow decision is not a problem and he encourages thorough consideration before a decision is made.

For the sub-proposition '*slow decision-making process introduces unnecessary delays and overhead cost*' the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figure 6.15 and 6.16, respectively. The charts below show that 73% of Private Sector respondents and 100% Public Sector wither agreed or strongly agreed with the sub-proposition concerning the 'introduction of delays and overhead cost for slow decision-making'.

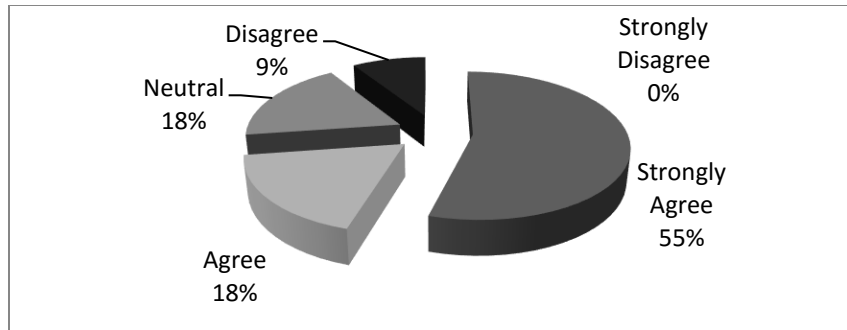


Figure 6.15: Introduction of delays & overhead cost for slow decision-making (**Pri. Sec.**)

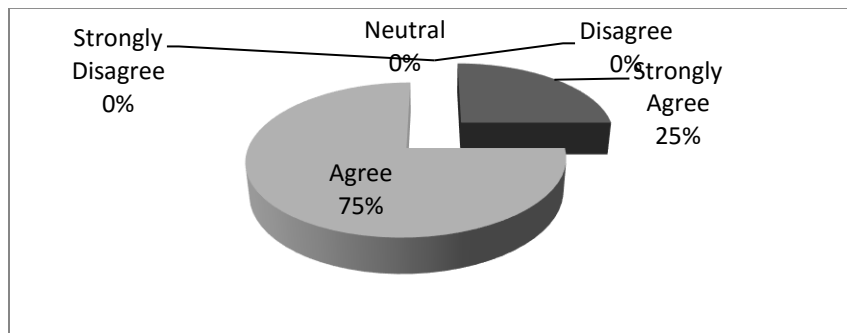


Figure 6.16: Introduction of delays & overhead cost for slow decision-making (**Pub. Sec.**)

A relatively high percentage of the respondents in the Private Sector agreed to the sub-proposition concerning 'introduction of delays and overhead cost for slow decision-making'. They agreed that slow decision-making process adds extra delays and cost. There are certain situations where decisions need to be made fast. For example, if a VIP is involved, then a decision may need to be taken immediately. Usually big projects that last for a long time (a few months to a few years) and have big budgets involve slow decisions, while small projects involve fast decisions. What is very important is the maturity of the organization and how much the authorized entity within the organization understands the impact of slow decision making process on the success or failure of the project.

Decisions at higher levels, usually above the Project Manager or PMO Director, in the Public Sector, are very slow, while decisions within the team, by the Project Manager or Team Leader, are faster. The main reason for the slow decision making process, in the

Public Sector projects, is related to politics and bureaucracy. Another reason for slow decisions in the Public Sector, is that no one in the government organization is willing to take responsibility for the decisions, and that's why you get to see many committees formed to make decisions and to avoid responsibility. This committee formation takes time, and once formed, requires time for members to meet.

Figure 6.14 indicates clearly that in the Public Sector, decisions are perceived to be made slower than in the Private Sector and that this adds extra time and cost to the project. One similarity between the two sectors is that decision makers seem to slow down when the decisions involve money. Not having direct access to the higher levels of management is another reason given for slow decisions.

The same decision maker can make slow and fast decisions at different situations. So it really depends on the situation. If the issue is clear, a decision will be made on the spot, according to one respondent in the Private Sector. And if the decision involves many stakeholders and *money* as well, then it will be made slowly.

In previous literature, KSA has scored high on the Collectivism Index. According to LeFebvre and Franke (2013) individuals with collectivistic background are more dependent in their decision making. From the evidence of the present study, this statement appears true to a certain extent in the Private Sector, but it is 100% true in the Public Sector projects. LeFebvre and Franke (2013) also stated that collectivists are more avoidant in their decision-making style. This was seen clearly in the example of forming committees in the Public Sector, to avoid individual responsibility for decisions.

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following themes were identified as important:

- *Slow decision-making* (Private and Public Sectors)



### 6.3.5 Protection in Return for Loyalty

The fifth proposition (*protection of subordinates, by superiors, in return for loyalty, is negatively associated with stakeholder management*) was introduced to investigate the existence of this phenomenon in the ICT projects and to study its impact on the stakeholders. This proposition is tested by asking two questions: *do superiors protect and/or favour individuals in return for loyalty? And does this behaviour make relationships within the team hard?* It was proposed that this phenomenon does exist and it has a negative impact on the stakeholders and in particular on the project team.

The Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA) was convinced that loyalty does not have a major role to play in his project environment. He also believed that being loyal to the boss (the PM) does not give the team member a preference over others at work. He added that:

*'I will not protect him when he makes mistakes or if he does not do his job ... this creates problems between team members ... work is work ... I could be flexible with him as long as it does not affect the work and as long as he does not make mistakes at work.'* (C1-PA)

What matters is 'professionalism' not 'loyalty', according to the Team Leader (C2-PA) of Project A. He indicated that he would give preference to a team member in exchange for his professionalism. He explained that:

*'In my team I do not protect anybody just for being loyal to me ... loyalty and showing respect are additions to the professionalism that can give him preference over the others.'* (C2-PA)

When asked about the issue of protection in return for loyalty, he agreed that this will make the relationships within the team more difficult.

One Project Engineer (C3-PA) IN Project A admitted that he was criticised by his management, at one point, for not favouring and protecting an individual within the team. He stated that:

*'I'm against this ... loyalty should be to the work and to the corporation, not to the manager.'* (C3-PA)

He explained that he never gives a preference of any member in the team over the others, as this may create conflict between them. He added that professionalism is what he takes into consideration, not relationships. When asked about the consequences of doing that, he replied:

*'Yes this behaviour [protection return for loyalty] could also lead to accusation of "racism" and "hatred" as well between the team members ... this could lead to the PM loses control over his team.'* (C3-PA)

Another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A has categorized the team members into two types in terms of loyalty: the first type has loyalty to the work itself and the second type is loyal to the boss (the PM), and this type (the second) does not care about work because he knows he will be favoured at the end by his boss.

He agreed that protection in return for loyalty makes relationships within the team more difficult. He explained further that:

*'Especially when the hard working employee is not getting credit for his work, while some other employee who is doing half of what he is doing is taken the credit and being favoured, protected and may be rewarded.'* (C4-PA)

Another Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A is convinced that even though work is very important and since he is living in a culture or environment, loyalty is important as well. He is convinced that there is a link between loyalty and doing a good job:

*'I believe that doing a good job will have an effect on loyalty, and loyalty does not have an effect on doing a good job ... meaning that if I do a good job I'm loyal to the company.'* (C5-PA)

When it comes to the impact of this phenomenon on the project, he commented that:

*'I believe that what important is business, and relationships between the team members will not become harder.'* (C5-PA)

The way the team is treated is based on 'work is what it counts' not on the personal loyalty to the boss, according to the Technical Manager (C6-PA) in Project A. He believed that:

*'The member's work, experience and knowledge are far more important than loyalty.'* (C6-PA)

Whenever it happens that an individual is favoured by his boss, the rest of the team will ask questions as why this employee, for example, is favoured, especially if the treatment was obvious like giving extra days off or paying him a bigger bonus. He added that:

*'This [favouring a team member over another] will create a tense environment within the team.'* (C6-PA)

According to the Project B's Project Manager (C1-PB) in private sector projects the PM would, for example, show his protection to a senior resource (team member) in order to keep him in his project because he thinks this resource is an asset to the team. He pointed out that in the government sector projects the evaluation of the resources is under the Ministry of Civil Services (MCS), and that means with or without protection the evaluation and promotion follows the ministry's rules.

*'Personally I would favour and/or protect a team member for being loyal to the company, not to me personally ... we follow ethics and rules.'* (C1-PB)

When it happens that one member is favoured in the team by having a salary increase, for example, then they always make sure it happens for a valid reason to avoid the sensitivity and possible conflict between the members of the team, according to the Project Manager. The PMO Director (C2-PB) of Project B acknowledged that protection and favouritism do exist in return for loyalty. He also agrees that this act impacts the project, negatively. He explained that:

*'Whoever listens to me will get my support ... this is what everybody applies at work.'* (C2-PB)

The Managing Director (C3-PB) in Project B also acknowledged that this phenomenon exists. He mentioned that they had one similar case in the past since he joined the company, nearly 14 years ago, when the PM at that time was buying loyalties and when he was discovered his employment was terminated. He commented that:

*'It's there with very small percentage.'* (C3-PB)

When asked about the consequences of this phenomenon on the project, the Managing Director stated that the sensitivity between the team members will increase and they will be watching each other for who is getting, for example, less work as a result of being favoured by his boss. This will result in producing less work by the rest of the team, as well as making the relationship between the team members harder, feeling jealous of the individual who is doing less work but getting extra benefits and rewards, as he explained.

According to the Project C's Project Manager (C1-PC) this phenomenon does not exist in his work place. He stated that in his company everything depends on how many projects the PM and his team closes. The PM and his team take credit based on that and not on personal relationship. At the end of the day the one who does a good job even if he is not loyal to his boss will get better evaluation at the end of the year than the one who is loyal and not doing that well, according to the Project Manager.

Being loyal to the company and being loyal to the boss are not that far from each other, according to the PMO Manager (C2-PC) of Project C. They will be for the benefit of the work. He explained that:

*'At the end of the day my loyalty is to my company and if a certain employee is loyal to me personally that implies that he is loyal to the company as well.'* (C2-PC)

Both the Project Manager and the PMO Manager agree that when protection in return for loyalty exists in any project it will negatively affect communication between the team members.

Relationships between the PM and his team are based on a weak matrix approach, as the Team Leader (C1-PD) of Project D explained. This means that the PM doesn't have real power over his team. It happens quite often in the public sector projects that a certain manager protects or favours a certain team member as long as that does not impact the manager's relationship with the higher management. Once this relationship is affected the protected employee will be left uncovered, according to the Team Leader. He believed that protection of individuals within the team makes the relationships within the team more difficult.

According to the Project Engineer (C2-PD) in Project D, the building of A relationship and mutual trust between the PM and his team will lead to the loyalty of the team to the boss (the PM). He stated that he would give preference or protection to individuals in his team because they are the ones who will be beneficial to the project. He explained that it is not about loyalty, it is about trust. He explained further that if he trusts one person or a group he makes sure they stay close to him and probably feed them with information relevant to the project more than the others, because he feels they are more useful to him than the rest of the team. He commented that:

*'I know that loyalty does not exist in the government projects and it's always interpreted differently depending on the individual(s).'* (C2-PD)

When the boss gets one or two team members close to him (for the benefit of the work) the rest of the team will start to think that this is a personal relationship where it is not, as stated by the Project Engineer. Relationship between the manager and his senior team members always seem as if it is personal. This relationship should not be misinterpreted, because this will make the relationship within the team harder.

In the absence of 'reward systems' in the government sector, and since the PM can't provide his team with incentives, the only thing that he can provide them with (as a reward for doing a good job) is to protect them and favour them, according to the Project D's Project Manager (C3-PD). He stated that favouring and protecting groups from the team is seen in the government sector more than the private sector, and in some cases it is based on tribal or family connections.

According to the PMO Director (C4-PD) of Project D, favouring and protecting individuals within the team exist here and even in other Arab countries like Jordan and UAE, in both private and public sectors, with levels of deference. He added that:

*'We see it in the public sector more because the "accountability system" in the public sector is not that strong ... we have noticed that the loyalty to the boss is more important than qualifications here ... the "trust zone" to the manager (boss) is more important than qualifications.'* (C4-PD)

According to the PMO Director, the act of protecting and or favouring in return for loyalty creates feelings between the team members of being mistreated (feel of injustice or unfairness), and this is very much in the government more than in the private sector. The problem of 'loyalty' in the government sector does not appear quickly on the surface, even though it exists, while in the private sector it appears more quickly when it exists, he explained. He stated that:

*'In the private sector projects the boss can't continue his protection to any of his team members in return for his loyalty if the member does not do a good job, while in the public sector he can do that for long period of time).'* (C4-PD)

### **Data Analysis**

Collectivism is a very important concept in understanding the Muslim World. According to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) Islam teaches its followers to stick together and co-operate with other Muslims. Since KSA has a high score on the Collectivism Index, it is expected to see the groups' interests prevail over individuals' interests. It was proposed that subordinates at work are expected to be loyal to their bosses, in return for protection by their bosses.

For the sub-proposition '*certain project team members or groups are protected or favoured, by their bosses, in return for loyalty*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.17 and 6.18, respectively. The charts below show that the Disagreement and Strong Disagreement to the sub-

proposition 'protection in return for loyalty' is 64% in the Private Sector, while the result in the Public Sector indicates a 100% Agreement.

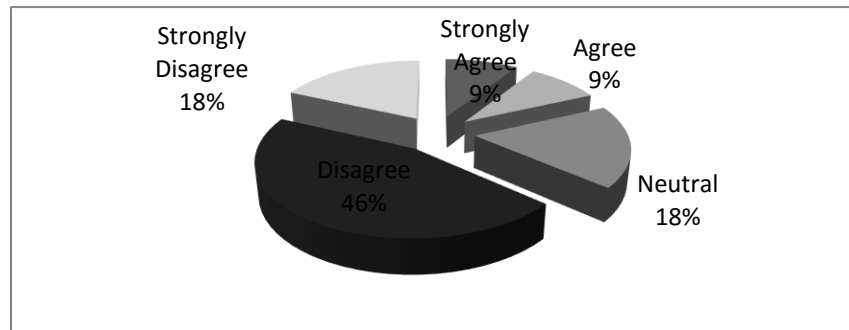


Figure 6.17: Protection in return for loyalty (**Private Sector**)

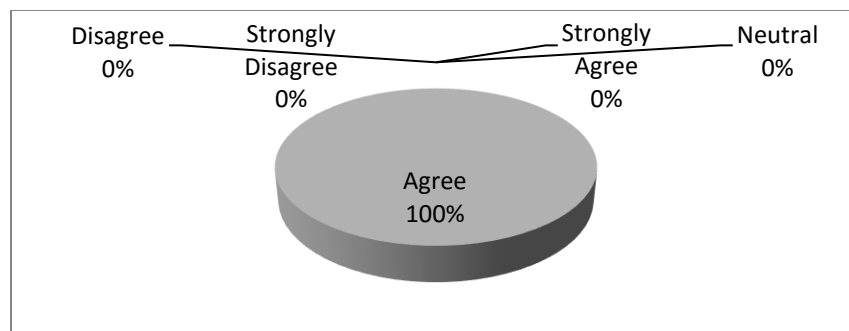


Figure 6.18: Protection in return for loyalty (**Public Sector**)

The relatively high disagreement in the Private Sector (64%) is an indication that loyalty to the boss does not appear to be so significant in the project environment in the Private Sector. Some respondents in the Private Sector stated that this phenomenon does not exist in their organizations, while others admitted its existence in small percentages of cases. In all cases, the majority agreed that loyalty should be to organization and not to the boss. What matters is '*professionalism*' rather than loyalty and relationships, as stated by the respondent (C3-PA). So a preference is granted to an individual in exchange for being professional. Protection in return for loyalty, as some of the Private Sector's respondents agreed on, makes relationships between the team members harder. It also could lead to accusations of racism and hatred, as pointed out by the respondent (C3-PA), which in turn could lead losing control over the team.

An interesting observation came from one interviewee (C5-PA) when he stated that a good job can impact loyalty, but loyalty can't impact a good job (meaning: 'I can be loyal to my company by doing a good job'.)

One Private Sector respondent tried to distinguish between protection for loyalty and the protection for the benefit of the work. He stated that he would protect an experienced and valuable team member in order to keep him in the project because he thought this individual was an asset to the team. He believed that this is different from protecting individuals in return for 'personal' loyalty.

To conclude, a relatively high percentage of Private Sector respondents believe that this phenomenon does not exist in their organizations, loyalty should be to the organization, and the one who does a good job even if he is not overtly loyal to his boss will get better evaluation at the end of the year than the one who is overtly loyal but not doing that well.

The response of those in the Public Sector projects was entirely different and shows total agreement to the sub-proposition concerning 'protection in return for loyalty'. One obvious difference is that projects in the Public Sector organizations are run based on a 'weak matrix' set up. This means that the project manager does not control his resources. The functional manager has full control of the resources and therefore any loyalty is to the functional manager, and not the project manager. Another good reason for this phenomenon in the public sector is because of the absence of a performance reward system in these organizations. According to one of the respondents, when a manager can't reward his people, for being loyal to him, by providing incentives, for example, the only choice he has left, is to protect and favour them. Favouring and protecting individuals in the team is seen more in the public than in the private sector. This is perhaps because the accountability system in the Public Sector is not effective.

Loyalty in the Public Sector is even more important than qualifications. Protection in return for loyalty is based on family and tribal connections. In the Private Sector, protection of individuals could last for short period of time, but ultimately results are important, and if the protected individual does not show professionalism, he and his



boss will be at risk of being removed. In the Public Sector, the phenomenon lasts longer because there is less effective accountability in place.

Protecting and favouring certain individuals creates feelings within the team of injustice and unfairness, and this could reflect on the project.

For the sub-proposition '*protecting or favouring certain groups of team members, by their bosses, makes relationships harder between team members*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.19 and 6.20, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong agreement to the sub-proposition 'hard relationships in return for protection by boss' is 91% and 75% in the Private and Public Sector projects, respectively, indicating clear positions for both sectors.

The high score (91%) in the case of the Private Sector projects indicates a clear position of the negative impact that could be expected on the project when such a phenomenon (protection in return for loyalty) exists. Even though this phenomenon seems to exist between the Public Sector projects, 75% of respondents still acknowledged that it could have a negative impact.

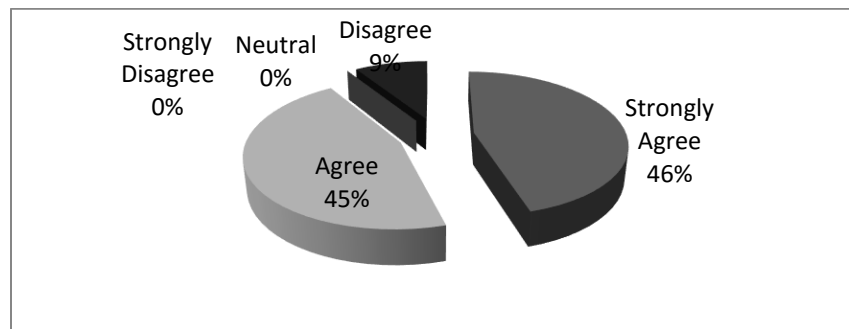


Figure 6.19: Hard relationships in return for protection by boss (**Private Sector**)

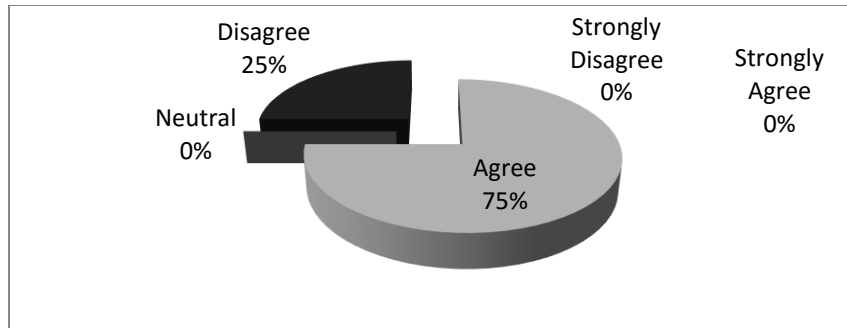


Figure 6.20: Hard relationships in return for protection by boss (**Public Sector**)

According to Trompenaars and Hampden-Turner (1997), applying a matrix system in the organization challenges the loyalty to the boss. This is true in the case of the Public Sector projects, where the functional manager protects his employees in return for loyalty to him. In the Arab World almost everything people do can potentially be considered to be on the basis of a favour. So the manager is doing his team a favour by protecting them, and they have to return the favour by being loyal to him. That explains why Arabs scored high on the Power Distance, as explained by Obeidat et al. (2012), who believed that decisions are based on favours not on competency, and that explains why loyalty to the boss is a key issue in the Public Sector organizations.

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following themes were identified as important:

- *Protection in return for professionalism* (Private Sector)
- *Protection in return for loyalty* (Public Sector)

### 6.3.6 Boss Knows it All and Has All Answers' Attitude

The sixth proposition (*The attitude that the boss knows it all and has all the answers, is negatively associated with integration management*) was introduced to investigate the existence of this phenomenon and to study its impact on the ICT projects. This proposition is studied by asking two questions: *is the boss capable of solving all project related issues? And does the 'boss knows it all and has all the answers' attitude puts*

*the chance of a successful project on risk?* It was proposed that this phenomenon has a negative impact on the stakeholders.

The Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA) suggested that the boss is supposed to have more experience than the rest of the team. He also suggested that the PM should be capable of answering his team's concerns or questions and to give them the required support. There are other situations where the PM might be occupying a position when he is not the right person for that position, according to the Project Manager. He commented that:

*'I've seen in other projects that the boss is not competent and for sure not the most capable person to lead the project team.'* (C1-PA)

As this Project Manager suggested it is not easy to have all the knowledge in one person (e.g. the PM). The reason for this as he explained is that the PM could be today the PM for a Tetra technology project, for example, and tomorrow he could be a Cisco technology project and so on. So it is difficult to be the man who knows everything and has all the answers for the management and technical issues.

To some extent, a demonstration by the boss that he knows it all and has all the answers is essential, as explained by the Project Manager. He believed that this attitude is part of the self-confidence, and self-confidence is important and managers need to have it. He went further to say that this attitude is considered as a skill and managers should have it.

*'I believe that it's good for the boss to show that he knows it all even if he does not. I would like to think that my team see me as the one who knows everything related to the project and that all my instructions are based on knowledge and experience.'* (C1-PA)

However, the Team Leader (C2-PA) of Project A acknowledged that having this attitude is a problem. He believed that the boss should listen to the others in his team and make a decision at the end. He explained that:

*'We don't have the attitude of the "one-man show" here, even at our higher management it does not exist because we have a system in place and we understand that such attitude will lead to project failure and this is a responsibility.'* (C2-PA)

The Project Engineer (C3-PA) in Project A agreed that the boss should be able to face all problems within his team and to solve the project related issues or at least escalate them to the higher levels of management. He commented that:

*'That's why he is there ... he should be competent and capable of solving technical and management issues.'* (C3-PA)

Another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A was against the idea of running a 'one-man show'. According to him, some of the bosses don't even listen to their employees and they usually deliver the messages or instructions without having the trouble of meeting with them, adding that:

*'You quite often hear the boss saying to his team "you go and solve your problems yourself ... I have no time for this".'* (C4-PA)

This Project Engineer explained that this attitude impacts the project negatively and that is why in his project his team has direct access to him and he is always with them at the site to try to solve their problems, even though he knows that he can't solve all their problems.

A third Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A is convinced that the PM is capable of solving about 80-90% of the project-related issues. He explained that the PM can't solve the remaining problems because his hands are tied down due to the favoured team members. He further explained that favouring certain team members will prevent the PM from solving problems that could produce solutions that may be seen, by the favoured members, as if they are abandoned. Regarding the consequences of this attitude, he stated:

*'I agree ... it's always a problem when you have a PM who wants to run the show by himself and not allow his team to question his decisions.'* (C5-PA)

When asked to comment, the Technical Manager (C6-PA) of Project A mentioned that sometimes there are problems that he can't solve. He replied that:

*'I would say 85-90% of the project-related issues can be solved by the PM ... some of the issues are beyond my ability and authority which has to be looked at by the next level of management.'* (C6-PA)

When asked about the impact of this attitude by the boss, the Technical Manager commented by saying that 'no one is superman and has all the answers'. He explained that the PM could get a hint or a solution, (that may never have crossed the boss' mind) to a big problem from one of the most junior members of the team. That could happen if the boss is a good listener, he added.

According to the Technical Manager, there are some cases where the PM is someone who would not accept any ideas from the others, especially from junior members. This PM would do anything to prove that what he recommends, to solve a problem, is the correct solution, even if he has to change part of the design. He commented that:

*'For me I always sit with my team and listen then I do what is right for the project.'* (C6-PA)

The PM for example could be familiar with a certain task but not with the business rules, and since this is a team work the PM consults with his team and comes up with a solution, the Project Manager (C1-PB) of Project B explained. When asked about the effect of such attitude, he stated that 'the boss (PM) knows it all' attitude jeopardises the project's success.

According to the PMO Director (C2-PB) of Project B, he and his teams are capable of solving all project-related problems: management and technical-wise. He stated that 'one man shows' will end up as failures. He believed that if the boss can't open a channel of communication with people under and above him, he will fail. He revealed that he sometimes follows this strategy (the boss knows it all) because he knows where he is going. But, he added, most of the time he doesn't do that. He stated that:

*'I'm personally open down to the most junior member of the team ... I don't have a problem as I always listen then make a decision (C2-PB).'*

According to the Managing Director (C3-PB) of Project B, some of the problems are out of the PM's control, especially if they are from the customer's side. He gave the following example:

*'If we start a project in March and are supposed to continue for six months ... we always take into consideration Summer and Ramadan breaks where most people don't do any work, especially if the customer is a government entity.'* (C3-PB)

The Project C's Project Manager (C1-PC) explained that his company's policy is that all appointed PMs are supposed to be originally team members who were promoted to be in the PM's positions (after having outstanding performance as project engineers or team leaders). That means they are capable of solving all technical and management-related problems.

The PMO Manager (C2-PC) of Project C stated that they have a rule that they apply in their company and that is:

*'As a PM you should be capable of solving 98% of the project related issues that you face ... you only come back to the PMO Director with 2% only.'* (C2-PC)

He emphasized that his PMs are capable and competent, and if the PM refers more than 2% of his issues to his boss, he'll be at risk of being replaced. He added that PMs need to be creative and he always expect that the 2% (referred to him) is related to money issues and not technical or management.

According to the Team Leader (C1-PD) in Project D, no one has the ability to solve all the problems in the project no matter what his position is. In the government sector projects, the PM is not the king of the project, and in many occasions you see the influence of the higher management on the PM. In such a culture and environment, the PM may not have the final word on his project related issues. One more reason for not being able to solve the project related issues is the fact that in the public sector the PMs are not, in most cases, qualified, but they are appointed as PMs for reasons related to

politics and bureaucracy. When asked about behaving like a dictator, the Team Leader answered that:

*'Being a dictator in the project will put the project at risk.'* (C1-PD)

According to the Project D's Project Manager (C3-PD) the decisions in most cases are made without thorough considerations of the case and that is why the boss is not capable of solving all the problems. He could solve some problems, but not all of them, even if the boss is qualified he's not aware of all the details of the project and therefore insisting on the fact that he is the one may put the project at risk.

According to the PMO Director (C4-PD) in Project D, the environment in his organization is a mix of functional and matrix, it is not fully 'projectized', and instead gives the functional manager an influence on the project. In this set up the PM has no control over the project resources. Since this is 'functional' and not 'projectized' the loyalty of the team member is always to his functional manager and this is on the expense of the project, as explained by the PMO Director. One important issue is that the resources are not fully assigned to a certain project as a result of the functional manager using his team to execute many tasks at the same time. The attitude of 'knowing it all' exists in the government organizations and it comes from the individual personality, according to the PMO Director. The lack of 'accountability' in government organizations encourages some bosses to act this way. He explained that:

*'The PM will not be held accountable for money or time loss if he insists on doing things his own way and was proved later that he was wrong.'* (C4-PD)

## **Data Analysis**

In cultures with relatively high Uncertainty Avoidance, like KSA, it is expected that managers behave autocratically. They expect their subordinates to have full faith in their ability and decisions, and to follow them with no questions asked. It is proposed that the project manager is capable, competent and has the ability to answer all project related issues.

For the sub-proposition '*the boss is capable of solving all the problems faced by his team members*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.21 and 6.22, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition is 73% in the Private Sector, but a 100% disagreement in the case of the Public Sector, indicating clearly opposite positions for the sectors.

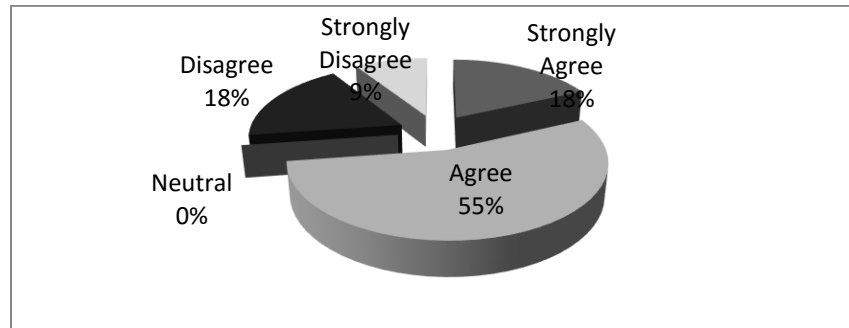


Figure 6.21: Boss' capability of solving all problems (**Private Sector**)

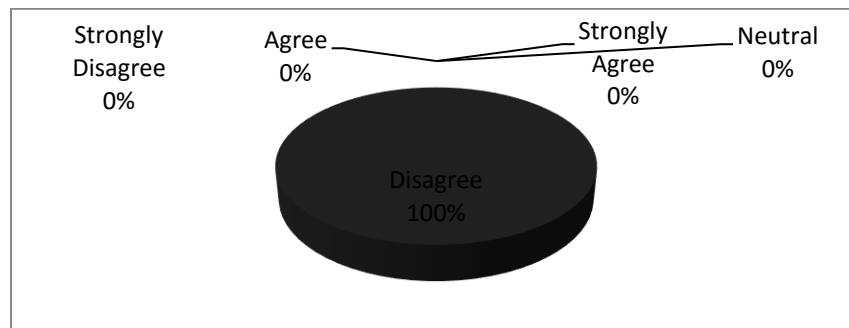


Figure 6.22: Boss' capability of solving all problems (**Public Sector**)

In general, responses from the Private Sector indicated that no manager has answers to all technical and management issues. They also indicated that the 'one-man show' attitude does not serve the idea of a comprehensive team that encourages open discussions and adaptation of the best ideas on the table. The majority of the respondents, in the Private Sector, believed that this attitude is a recipe for failure. They also indicated that they always make decisions after they sit with their teams and discuss the project issues.



The following respondent (C1-PA) explains part of the reason of this relatively high score (73%) on the sub-proposition concerning 'boss' capability of solving all problems' in the case of the Private Sector projects. According to this respondent, in the Private Sector the project manager needs to show his team and the stakeholders that he is in full control by showing he knows everything and is capable. This attitude is part of the self-confidence that managers need to have, he explained. Other respondents pointed out that if managers are really capable of running the projects they should be capable of solving 80-90% of the project related issues. The remaining 10-20% is beyond their control, and one of the reasons for that, as explained by one respondent, is because the project manager's hands are tied due to the influence of favoured team members of their project team.

Another respondent (C2-PC) in the Private Sector stated that his project managers are capable of solving more than 98% of the project issues. So the expectations from these project managers are very high. One good reason for this high expectation is the fact that these project managers are originally team members who were promoted to PM positions. That means, in their boss's opinion, that they are capable of solving all (or nearly all) technical and management-related problems.

Sometimes it happens in Private Sector projects, that an individual is appointed as a project manager when he is not qualified for that position. This does not happen often in the Private Sector. And when it happens it does not last for long, especially when project issues start to appear, and the project manager shows his incompetence and inability in dealing with these issues.

In general, many respondents, in the Private Sector, indicated that they listen to their teams and look for solutions from even the most junior member in the team before they make decisions. They also believed that the attitude of the 'boss knows everything' can be disastrous for the project.

As far as the Public Sector is concerned, the major reason for scoring high (100%) disagreement with the sub-proposition is the fact that in Public Sector projects the project manager does not fully control his project. The influence on his behaviour of the

senior officials in the government organizations can be seen clearly. This is one of the important reasons why the project manager can't solve all project related issues. Another reason is the distinct possibility that the project manager is not competent and not qualified, and the only reason he was appointed in that position is politics and bureaucracy. The non-existence of an effective reward system in government organizations encourages some bosses to play the 'one-man show' and to impose their own way of managing the project. Most of the interviewees agreed that being a 'dictator' in the project will put the project at risk.

Another reason why the project manager can't solve all project issues, in Public Sector projects, is that decisions are made by the project manager without thorough considerations, and without consultations with the team. One more reason for the project manager to not being able to solve all his problems is that fact that government organizations are not fully 'projectized'. They have a mix of functional and matrix management systems, and that gives the functional manager the upper hand when it comes to making decisions on the project issues. In government projects, resources keep moving and shifting from one project to another, making it hard to resolve any issue.

For the sub-proposition *'the belief, by the boss, that he is the only one who knows it all and has all the answers jeopardises the chance of producing a successful project'*, the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.23 and 6.24, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition amounts to 91% and 100% in the Private and Public Sector projects, respectively, indicating broadly similar positions for both sectors.

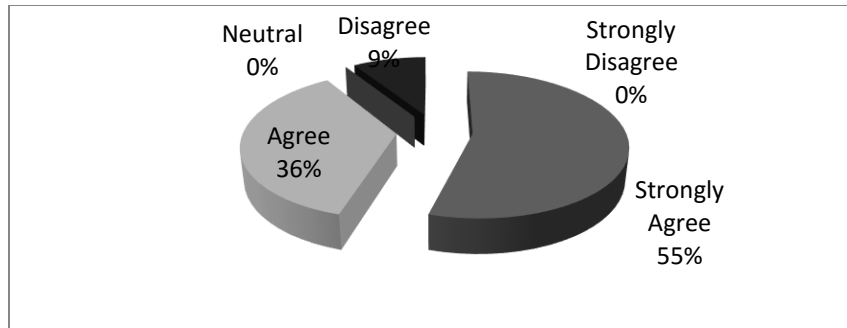


Figure 6.23: Boss' attitude of his capability jeopardizes project success (**Priv. Sec.**)

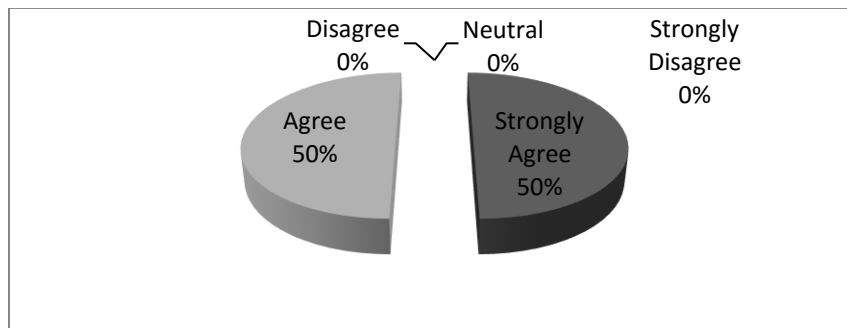


Figure 6.24: Boss' attitude of his capability jeopardizes project success (**Pub. Sec.**)

The high Power Distance index of KSA is an indication of the social gap between superiors and subordinates, according to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993). This is clearly true in the case of the Public Sector in KSA. The responses from some interviewees also show that the Saudi society accepts that bosses should distinguish themselves from the others (Hofstede, 1980), and that was seen clearly in the government projects. This, incidentally, also concurs with the Islamic Teachings of accepting authority and status hierarchy, as explained by Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993).

According to House and Mitchell (1974), the directive leadership's role is to minimize the 'role ambiguity of subordinates' by providing clear instructions and procedures to achieve the required goal. This is true in the government organizations business, where the dictatorship and the 'one-man show' seem to dominate. Leaders in high power distance cultures do not consult with their subordinates before they make decisions, as in the government projects, and this concurs with Hofstede (2001).

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following themes were identified as important:

- *Boss knows it all and has all the answers' attitude* (Private Sector)
- *Boss doesn't have all the answers' attitude* (Public Sector)

### 6.3.7 Flexible Milestones

The seventh proposition (*Flexible milestone is negatively associated with time management*) was introduced to investigate the existence of this phenomenon and to study its impact on the ICT projects. This proposition is tested by asking two questions: *are milestones treated as if they are flexible? And does delaying or missing milestones add extra cost?* It was proposed that this phenomenon has a negative impact on the project cost.

When asked about the idea of treating milestones as if they are flexible, the Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA) in stated that a milestone is sharp and not flexible. The reason for that, as he explained, is that:

*'Milestone can't be changed because there is always a penalty involved ... milestones mean dates that have to be met with no flexibility.'* (C1-PA)

As part of the human nature, people seem to relax and take their time if they know that milestones are flexible, according to the Project Manager. He further explained that this will lead to having loads of work piling up which will impact the project overall.

When asked about the missing or delaying milestones and its impact, the Project Manager stated that once milestones start accumulating, as a result of continuous delays, the team and the project will be out of control. In some cases when time is not met, it is not necessarily considered a failure, because the delay was caused by the customer, according to the Project Manager. When asked about the situation where the project is considered a failure, he replied that:

*'If the delay is caused by the customer, then it's not a failure, but if the delay is caused by us, then it might be considered a failure.'* (C1-PA)

The Team Leader (C2-PA) of Project A believed that milestones are not always treated as if they are flexible. He believed that it depends on the customer, as some customers are flexible when it comes to milestones. He also believed that missing or delaying milestones could result in project failure. He stated that:

*'To me milestone is important and I treat it this way unless (and this happens sometimes) that the customer asks for certain deliverables to be delayed because they are not ready to receive it.'* (C2-PA)

A Project Engineer (C3-PA) in Project A explained that he does not treat milestones as if they are flexible. The reason for that is the fact that every milestone in the project depends on the previous milestone, as he explained, which means that the whole project will be impacted and possibly delayed. This Project Engineer stated that from the start of the project he makes sure he doesn't miss or delay milestones unless he is faced with delayed certain equipment, for example, which is usually beyond his control or delay by the customer in full filling his obligations towards the project. He also believed that milestones are like beads in a necklace when one of them is dropped down, the rest will follow. He pointed out that:

*'If you lose one milestone, you will lose the rest of the milestones that come after it, unless you decide to work extra hours and make the time.'* (C3-PA)

According to another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A, in most cases they don't stick to the time line, as it depends on the contract if it addresses the late delivery of milestones or not. Some customers accept late delivery while some others may ask for penalties to be applied on the supplier, as he explained. He further stated that:

*'From the PM side and based on reality milestones are treated as if they are flexible and sometimes the PM delays and even cancels certain milestones.'* (C4-PA)

He does not believe that delaying or missing milestones will lead to project delay or failure. He believed that once the project starts and faced with missing or delaying

milestones the customer will not terminate the project, and he will probably find a way around that, and thus the project will not be a failure.

Milestones with specific dates for delivery came as a result of long and careful planning, so if one milestone is flexible then the whole project is flexible, as explained by another Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A. He added that milestones are related to money and payments, and this is very important. He added that:

*'Here in KSA we stick to milestones in terms of deliverables, but when it comes to issuing payments the customer is always late.'* (C5-PA)

When asked about the impact of delaying milestones, he mentioned that he did not see project failure as an inevitable result of delaying or missing milestones. He explained that in the past he had seen delays in certain milestones but that did not make the project a failure, because the customer showed his understanding of the delay. He noted that:

*'Sometimes the delay is out of our hands as the supplier of the hardware does not deliver the equipment on time.'* (C5-PA)

The Technical Manager (C6-PA) of Project A agreed with his engineers that milestones are not flexible. He explained that he and his team are very strict on this as money payments depend on meeting these milestones. He also agreed that delaying or missing milestones will lead to at least project delay and probable failure.

The Project Manager (C1-PB) of Project B did not agree that milestones are treated as if they are flexible. He stated that in his projects he makes sure that milestones are met. About the impact of missing or delaying milestones, he explained that in IT project life cycle the 'development', 'analysis' and 'design' stages are all milestones. He further explained that a milestone can't be started before the finish of the previous milestone; otherwise the possibility of a 'change' later is very high causing project delay and may be failure.

To the PMO Director (C2-PB) in Project B, milestones are the highest priority, because they affect the whole project, as he put it. He does not treat milestones as flexible, and he always keeps his eyes on them because milestones mean money. He commented:

*'Most of the time we fail to get milestones on time because of the situation of the customer ... not because of us ... but we always do our best to stay on track when it comes to milestones.'* (C2-PB)

The Project B's Managing Director (C3-PB) agrees with his PMO director and project manager that milestones are not and should not be treated as flexible. He stated that:

*'If you ask me about the buyer's (customer) side I'll say "yes" milestones are treated as if they are flexible ...but not from the seller's side like our company.'*  
(C3-PB)

According to the Managing Director, the reason for not treating milestones as if they are flexible is because as he put it 'time is money'. He explained that if a PM does not deliver a certain milestone on time, this impacts his evaluation and therefore his annual bonus might be less for that year. His company policy is "within time and budget you'll get full bonus". He believed that this policy encourages PMs to treat milestones as if they are untouchable.

When asked about the impact of loose milestones on the project, the managing director strongly agrees that time and possibly cost will be negatively impacted. He believed that milestones mean something to the seller, but not much to the buyer, especially if the buyer is a government entity. He gave the following example:

*'One of the projects was supposed to be handed over after 10 months, but it lasted 33 months i.e. a delay of 23 months and it was with a government entity ... there were many reasons for that and all of them from the buyer's side ... like the non-readiness of the infrastructure.'* (C3-PB)

According to the Project Manager (C1-PC) and PMO Manager (C2-PC) of Project C, milestones are not treated as if they are flexible. The Project Manager pointed out that:

*'We do not do that [treat milestones as if they are flexible] in this company.'* (C1-PC)

In their business it is unusual to delay milestones, as he put it, unless the vendor has a strong relationship with the customer, otherwise the customer will not accept any delays. Both managers believe that with flexible milestones, the whole project plan will be shifted.

The Team Leader (C1-PD) in Project D acknowledged that milestones are treated as if they are flexible in the government projects. He stated that:

*'(Money) means nothing to them and (time) is not counted.'* (C1-PD)

He explained that if the time and cost go beyond what was planned that does not mean a lot to them in the success or failure of a project, according to the Team Leader. He explained that the team executes projects for the government organization during the regular working hours (which is the time) and the team monthly salaries (which is the budget). So taking extra time does not mean "loss" to them. In other words no one will know what the allocated budget and time to deliver the project, even though they count the hours as part of the weekly/monthly working hours for the payroll purposes only, according to the Team Leader. He noted that:

*'That's why milestones in the government projects are not strict and always treated as if they are flexible.'* (C1-PD)

Delaying or missing milestones will at least delay the project and could cause a failure, according to the Team Leader (C1-PD) and the Project Engineer (C2-PD) of Project D. The higher management, and from the start of the project, when the scope is defined, they add flexibility to the milestones, especially, in the government projects, according to the Project Engineer.

According to the Project D's Project Manager (C3-PD) nobody in the public sector projects is held accountable on the "time" factor. Many government projects failed because of the time lost. He explained that:



*'When time is wasted and lost as a result of the government practices, the reason for the delay is blamed on the vendor.'* (C3-PD)

According to the Project Manager, the most important factor in the PM's success is 'communication'. A PM could delay a milestone and end up with a successful project if he has open channels of communication with the team, the vendor and the higher management. He can overcome this issue and make it up and deliver on time. When asked how he would classify a project in terms of success or failure, he stated that tagging a project as a success or failure is based on the measures the management or the PM sets. Usually in the government RFP the time limit is open or made longer than normal (i.e. allowing extra time) so there will be no money penalty for not meeting the milestones or even taking longer than agreed on or specified in the contract.

Treating milestones as if they are flexible by missing and delaying them is one of the problems that government organizations face all the time, according to the PMO Director (C4-PD) OF Project D. In all government projects interruptions occur and projects plans keep expanding (scope creep) causing continuous changes in priorities. Based on his experience of government projects, this PM treats milestones as flexible because he knows that sometimes when he is in the middle of a project, for example, he receives a phone call from the office of a high official asking him to do something else, urgently. As a result of that, the project stops and the allocated resources are used to support another project, somewhere else. Interruptions happen all the time and that's why milestones are not carved in stones. He added that:

*'PM always tries to add buffer time to the plan to deal with delays as a result of these interruptions ... in most cases the "time factor" is not important in the government projects.'* (C4-PD)

According to the PMO Director, since the establishment of the PMO in this government organization, nearly 3 years ago, there was a serious effort from the PMO team to introduce what the project management methodologies and techniques can do to improve the chances of successful projects. They tried to highlight the importance of certain concepts like "milestone" in the lifecycle of a project.

## Data Analysis

In cultures with low Uncertainty Avoidance, religion plays a significant role in the daily business and in project management. Muslims believe that God is in full control of everything and that time is in God's hand (Herbig and Dunphy, 1998). Based on the literature review, in these cultures Time is not considered an important element in the success or failure of the projects. Milestones can be delayed and may be cancelled. It was proposed that milestones are treated as if they are flexible. Both Private and Public Sector projects have been studied to try to understand how milestones are treated.

For the sub-proposition '*milestones are treated as if they are flexible*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.25 and 6.26, respectively. The charts below show that Private Sector respondents broadly disagreed, with 91% of respondents either disagreeing or strongly disagreeing. In the case of the Public Sector the response was the opposite, with a 100% response to indicate Agreement or Strong Agreement.

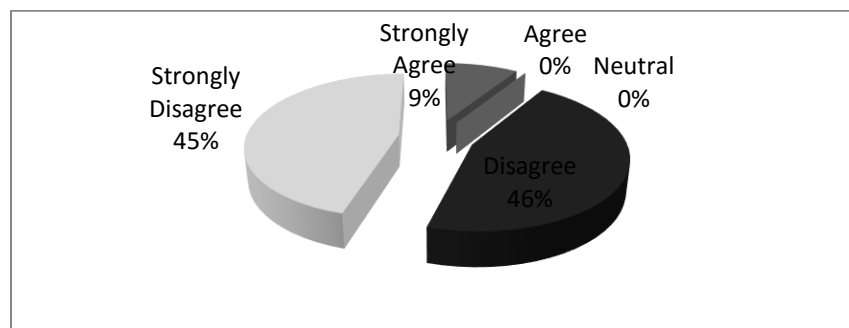


Figure 6.25: Flexible milestones (**Private Sector**)

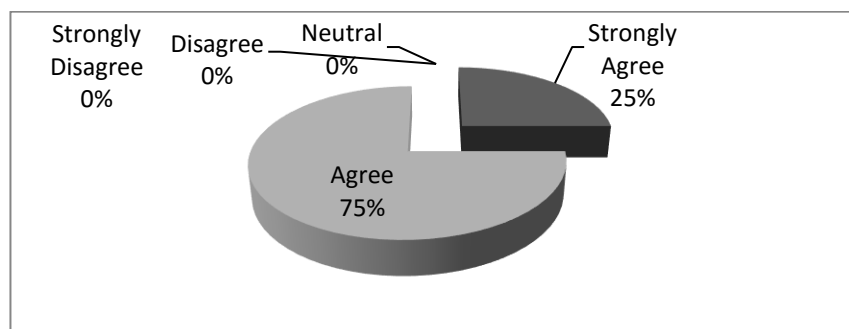


Figure 6.26: Flexible milestones (**Public Sector**)

The majority of the respondents in the Private Sector projects repeated that milestones are not flexible and they are not treated as flexible, at least from their side (the vendor's side). The high score (91%) by the Private Sector respondents on the sub-proposition concerning 'flexible milestones' demonstrates how important is keeping milestones fixed. To them milestones mean money, so they can't afford to allow the customer or end user to apply penalties as a result of being easy on major deliverables. For some, once the milestones start accumulating, as a result of delays, the team and the project will be out of control. This could lead to project delay or failure. Milestones for some, are like a chain of beads, and once you delay one milestone the rest will be delayed, causing a delay to the entire project.

On the other hand, some of the Private Sector respondents believe that milestones are treated as if they are flexible, and this, as they put it, is based on reality. Sometimes milestones are delayed and other times cancelled. Some respondents distinguished between the vendor and the customer side when asked about delays milestones: the customer side is always flexible and would accept delays in milestones, but not the vendor's side. In fact, most of the delays in delivering milestones, according to the vendor, are blamed on the customer's side. However, not all customers accept delays in milestones, depending on the relationship with the vendor. Some seek to apply penalties when delays happen. Some of the contracts don't address late delivery, which means everything depends on verbal time frame agreement. In most cases the project will not be terminated or cancelled as a result of late delivery as most responses indicate.

The vendors in the KSA Private Sector stick to milestones, but the customer does not stick to the timing of payments based on these milestones. Payments are always late. Some customers even ask the vendor to delay certain milestones (deliverables) because they are either are not ready to receive it (especially if it is hardware and needing a space in their warehouse, or their infrastructure is not ready according to the plan). Most of the time that vendors in the Private Sector fail to meet the milestones it is because of the customer, as was explained by one interviewee (C2-PB). But this does not discourage the vendor from treating milestones more seriously, as if they are curved

in a stone. For some, if a project manager does not deliver a certain milestone on time, his evaluation and therefore his annual bonus will be impacted for that year. This policy encourages project managers to treat milestones as if they are untouchable.

The Public Sector respondents' score of 100% on the sub-proposition concerning 'flexible milestones' is a clear indication of how milestones are treated. In the Public Sector milestones are flexible and are treated as such. One interesting finding is that 'money' means nothing and 'time' is not counted in the government ICT projects, according to one respondent. This implies that milestones are not important. So if time and cost go beyond what was planned that does not mean a lot to them in the success or failure of a project. The concepts of time and cost in Public Sector projects are not the same as in the Private Sector. In the Public Sector, the team executes projects for the government organization during the regular working hours (which is the time) and the team monthly salaries (which is the budget). So taking extra time does not mean 'losses' to them.

One important issue in Public Sector projects is that nobody is held accountable on the 'time' factor. When time is lost as a result in the Public Sector projects, the reason for the delay is always blamed on the vendor. One reason as why project managers in the Public Sector treat milestones as if they are flexible is because interruptions to these projects happen all the time, priorities change, and resources are moved from one project to another, which makes sticking to milestones impossible.

For the sub-proposition *'missing or delaying milestones is a major cause of project delay and probable failure'*, the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors are shown in Figure 6.27 and 6.28, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition is 82% and 100% in the Private and Public Sector, respectively, indicating clearly similar positions for both sectors, albeit with slightly less agreement on the side of the Private Sector.

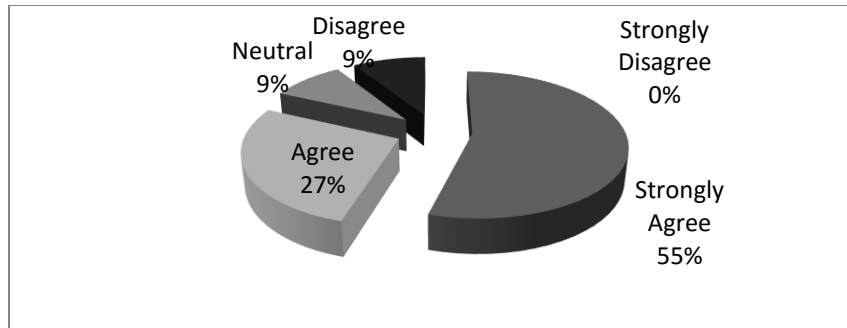


Figure 6.27: Project delays for missing or delaying milestone (**Private Sector**)

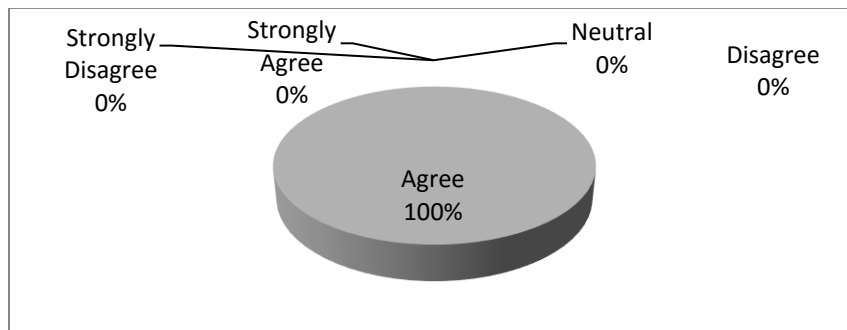


Figure 6.28: Project delays for missing or delaying milestone (**Public Sector**)

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following themes were identified:

- *Fixed milestones* (Private sector)
- *Flexible milestones* (Public sector)

### 6.3.8 Pursuit of Short-Term Success

The eighth proposition (*Pursuit of short-term success is negatively associated with quality management*) was introduced to investigate short term success and its impacts on quality. This proposition is examined by asking two questions: do project managers prefer short-term success? And is quality of the product sacrificed for the short-term success? It was proposed that this phenomenon does exist and it has a negative impact on the quality of the product.

When asked about the short term success as a strategy, the Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA) made it clear that he does not prefer short term success. Since all projects are related to certain dates and milestones, he usually keeps his focus on the milestones, aiming for success in his project. He stated that:

*'I usually go for long term success ... i.e. when I'm done with the project deliverables 100%.'* (C1-PA)

According to the Project Manager, quality is very important. He stated that he would like to deliver a successful project with quality, but sometimes he might sacrifice quality for meeting some unexpected requirements from the customer.

The Team Leader (C2-PA) in Project A pointed out that after they deliver the product to the customer there is always a maintenance phase which follows the close of the project. To him, short term success means that all problems left behind by the PM will come back to them during the maintenance phase. He pointed out that:

*'This will be on the expense of the quality of the product, and that's why we prefer long term success.'* (C2-PA)

When the PM's work towards achieving short term success they will be exposed to consequences and issues in the long term, according to the Project Engineer (C3-PA) of project A. He believed that delivering bad quality products will probably lead to costly maintenance later on. He stated that:

*'If the aim is a short term success the product will come back to haunt the service provider later on.'* (C3-PA)

Another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A is against the idea of going for short term success. He believed that quality should not be sacrificed. He stated that he quite often gets messages from the project consultant (appointed by the customer) saying 'even if the product is not ready, yet, just go ahead and deliver it to the customer and we'll have to deal with the consequences later on'. He commented that:

*'I would not do that [going for short-term success].'* (C4-PA)

A third Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A made an interesting point when he stated that we are living in a society (KSA) where success is evaluated based on the time the PM spends on the task. He explained that if the PM succeeded in doing a certain task in short time then they treat him as a genius. He explained that:

*'I know that quality is important, but this is how they look at you ... as a result this will push you to walk the path of the short term success.'* (C5-PA)

Short term success policy leaves the PM and his company with additional cost, assuming the same company does the after-sale maintenance, according to the Project B's Project Manager (C1-PB). In most cases IT companies producing IT products (software) for their customers end up signing 'maintenance agreements' to continue support their products after sale, and this will be costly especially if the quality of the product was not up to the standard, he explained. He further explained that:

*'In the IT world where the product is an application or programme, you can't aim for short term success ... it just does not work.'* (C1-PB)

When asked about the consequences of the short term policy, he explained that they always turn down requests by customers to finish a project in a reduced time period. If they are not convinced that they can deliver with the right quality they'll not do it, he added. He noted:

*'Quality has levels: low grade and low quality ... low quality will give you problems, and low grade gives you the functionality without giving the full technical specifications required.'* (C1-PB)

The PMO Director (C2-PB) in Project B stated that in most cases his project teams don't go for short term success. He noted that if you get the product delivered fast you'll lose the good quality. He also stated that:

*'Sometimes short term success is good because the PM closes the project and gets the benefits from that ... but I'll try to keep my eyes on the quality of the product ... I always make courtesy visits to the customer to make sure they have*

*no complains ... we also do surveys with the customers to make sure they receive the quality they expect.'* (C2-PB)

The success factors are quality, scope and time, according to the Project B's Managing Director (C3-PB). So quality is important even if the PM works towards short term success, he added. He believed that some of the PMs do that. He explained that they look for 'quick wins' in the time being, and if any problem arises later on the maintenance department has to deal with it. He confirmed that:

*'This attitude does exist in the projects with approximately 30% of the cases.'*  
(C3-PB)

According to the Project C's Project Manager (C1-PC), short term policy does not work for them. It will make them lose their credibility with their old customers. Quality does not go with short term success, as he put it. Both Project Manager and PMO Manager (C2-PC) of Project C agreed that short term success would be at the expense of the quality of the product.

In government projects management does appear to aim for short term success. May be it is wrong but it is there, according to the Team Leader (C1-PD) of Project D. The top management starts to have propaganda around the project by advertising that the project is ready when it is not. They do everything they can to look as if the project is ready for final delivery while it is still far from being that. The reason for doing that is because one of the top management wants to take credit in front of his boss (high senior official). The quality of the product is not an issue, and it is the last thing they think of, especially that the product is not fully ready for publishing. He stated that:

*'The PM would look for short term success in return for immediate credit, leaving the unfinished part of the project to the maintenance phase.'* (C1-PD)

Since changes happen more often in the government structure impacting government projects, the PM will go for a short term success as he can't guarantee changes will not happen causing the project to be delayed or terminated, according to the Project Engineer (C2-PD) of Project D. He added that:



*'I'm against this ... I would like to succeed in delivering a project on time and on budget with no issues, even if the project was delayed, still I would work towards producing a product with the right quality, even though the term "quality" does not exist in the government projects.'* (C2-PD)

The Project Manager (C3-PD) in Project D believed that in the government sector projects it is always a show off. Propaganda, as he put it, is the way of doing business in his organization, and it is very important in all public sector businesses. The motivation is to try to deliver the project even if it is not completely finished so you can have a credit. Short term success is what they do in this organization, and quality is never a concern, according to the Project Manager.

According to the PMO Director (C4-PD) in Project D, if a senior government official desires to launch a certain service (application), the organization will go public and start advertising it on TV and newspapers. They would sacrifice the quality in order to get this service to the public in a hurry. He stated that:

*'These projects are "last minute projects" with continuous changes in the requirements ...they usually end up with bad quality when they are delivered and they start fixing them as they go and start using them ... so, yes, they would go for short term success on the expense of the quality.'* (C4-PD)

### **Data Analysis**

From the literature review it was proposed that project managers would go for short term success to get immediate benefits; and it is assumed that short term success is always on the expense of quality.

For the sub-proposition '*project managers prefer short-term success*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors are shown in Figures 6.29 and 6.30, respectively. The charts below show that the Disagreement and Strong Disagreement to the sub-proposition concerning '*pursuit of short-term success*' is 64% for Private Sector projects, while the result shows a 75% Agreement in the Public Sector projects.

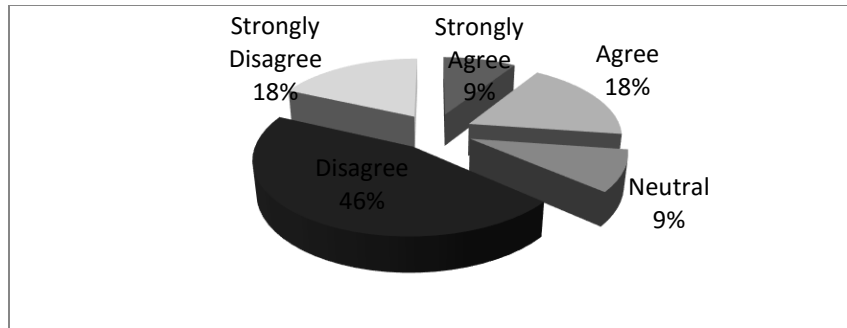


Figure 6.29: Pursuit of short-term success (**Private Sector**)

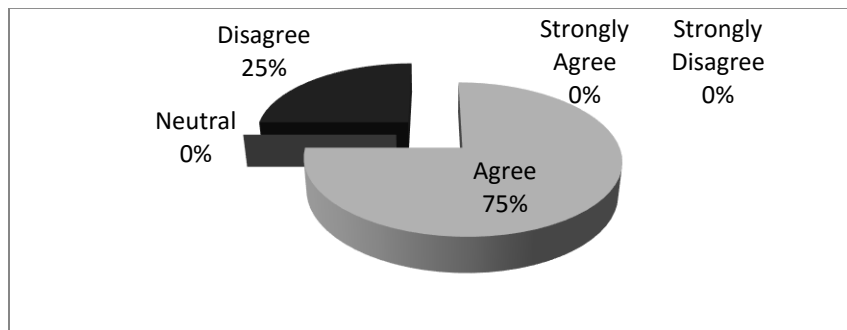


Figure 6.30: Pursuit of short-term success (**Public Sector**)

Some of the respondents operating in Private Sector projects stated that they don't go for short-term success as it makes them lose credibility with their customers. The goal of any organization is to deliver complete projects on time on budget and with quality. To these respondents, short-term success means leaving behind part or parts of the project, unfinished, or delivering the project with no regard for quality. Short-term success is always at the expense of quality, as one respondent (C2-PA) stated. Delivering a poor quality product usually ends up as costly during the maintenance stage, which is usually part of their contract.

The relatively few Private Sector respondents that admitted that they go for short-term success did so to accommodate unexpected requirements from the customer. Some customers (e.g. government organizations) keep changing their requirements until the last minute, not taking into account the time factor for these vendors. To overcome this problem some project managers, in the Private Sector, would go ahead and close and deliver the product, at reduced quality, leaving the fixing part to the maintenance stage.

According to one of the respondents, the possibility of having the short-term success between the project managers in his organization is about 30%. He calls these cases 'quick wins'. One respondent made a point that in the Private Sector projects in KSA, success for project manager is evaluated based on the amount of time he spends on the task: the shorter it takes the project manager to get the product delivered to the customer the more successful he is. So this respondent would go for short-term success (with or without quality) if he thought there was a benefit in doing so.

The responses from those operating in the Public Sector projects (75% in Agreement to the sub-proposition) reveal that management usually aims for short-term success and that 'Quality' is not a concern in the Public Sector projects. Some respondents went further to say that 'quality' does not even exist in their 'project management dictionary'. So, most project managers go for short-term success, in return for immediate credit, leaving the incomplete parts of the product to the maintenance phase.

One main reason for the emphasis on short-term success in Public Sector projects, is the propaganda strategy used by top management, to market the project and to make it look as if it is ready for delivery, when it is not. This puts pressure on the project team to try to finish and deliver according to the time frame advertised by the higher officials. So they end up with a product with compromised quality. Another reason for the 'short-term success approach' in Public Sector projects is because changes happen more often in the government structure impacting the government projects. In this case the project manager will go for a short-term success as he can't guarantee changes will not happen causing the project to be delayed or terminated.

For the sub-proposition '*quality of the product is sacrificed for short-term success*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.31 and 6.32, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition concerning 'sacrificing quality for short-term success' is 82% and 75% in the Private and Public Sector projects, respectively. The fact that the Public Sector respondents acknowledge the negative impact of pursuing short-term success in their projects *but still do it*, is because (as they put it) of the non-stability of the government policies.

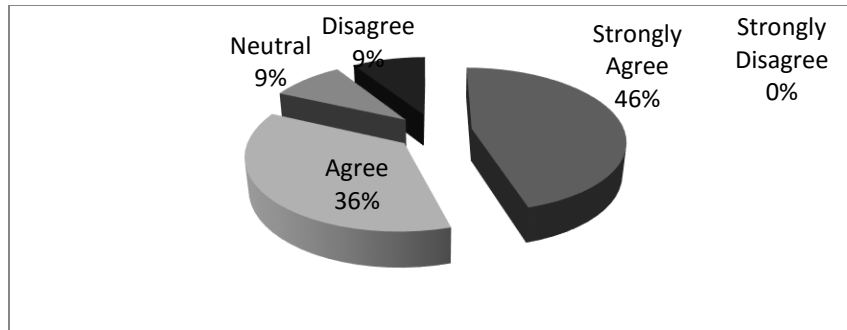


Figure 6.31: Sacrificing quality for short-term success (**Private Sector**)

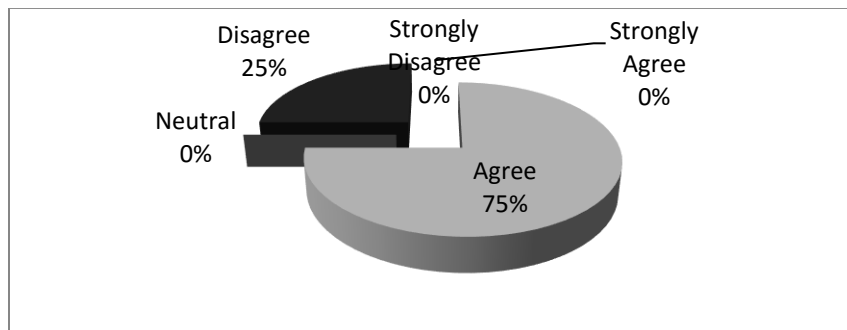


Figure 6.32: Sacrificing quality for short-term success (**Public Sector**)

According to Obeidat et al., (2012), Arabs, including Saudis, believe in reducing uncertainty avoidance by long-term planning. Whilst the results from the Private Sector appear to support this notion, the responses from the Public Sector do not. Looking for short-term results or success is one of the features of Short-Term Orientation cultures.

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following themes were identified:

- *Pursuit of long-term success* (Private Sector)
- *Pursuit of short-term success* (Public Sector)

### 6.3.9 Working Long Hours

The ninth proposition (*Working long hours is negatively associated with effective risk management*) was introduced to investigate the acceptance of working long hours and its effect on the health of the team. This proposition is tested by asking two questions:

are teams prepared to working extra hours; and does working long hours introduce hazard and health problems? It was proposed that this phenomenon has a negative impact on the risk management.

In his reply to the question whether his team is ready to work extra hours, the Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA) stated that usually there is a plan in place, and times and milestones are usually specified. Everything is scheduled based on the working hours, he added. He can't force his team to work extra hours because he wants to deliver earlier than planned. He also stated that he can't force them because they have their own lives and families to take care of. He explained that:

*'However if there is a real need for the extra work, in this case yes, they are willing to work extra hours ... but not all the team members would accept to do extra hours.'* (C1-PA)

He agrees that working long hours creates health problem, especially during the hot weather.

The Team Leader (C2-PA) of Project A stated that his team is prepared to do extra hours if they are asked to. He also believed that working extra hours, especially in the telecom projects, dealing with power lines, welding and tower installations can cause health problems. He pointed out that even in the IT projects like sitting for too long can cause back problems and working in front of the laptop can cause damage to the eyes and so on.

The Project Engineer (C3-PA) of Project A agreed with the team leader that his team is prepared to do extra hours. He explained that from the start of the project the project manager makes sure they accept the idea of doing extra hours. He stated that:

*'It's usually made clear at the kick-off meeting that the team may need to work extra hours (unpaid) if the need arises.'* (C3-PA)

Having said that, the Project Engineer added, that they always make sure that the team is not forced to work outside under the heat for long hours, and if they have to do it will be for a short time.

Another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A is relating the acceptance (to do extra hours) to the over-time money they are getting. Some of them accept to work reasonable extra hours, and some of them don't. It depends on the individual. When asked about the health consequences of doing extra hours, he replied that:

*'Mental concentration or sitting on a chair for long time could create health problems.'* (C4-PA)

Working extra or long hours is part of the nature of work, anywhere, according to another Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A, and this has consequences on the individuals. It will have negative impact on both in-door and out-door team members, especially working in hot weather pulling telecom cables and working on microwave towers, as explained by this project engineer.

The Technical Manager (C6-PA) of project A related the acceptance or refusal to do extra hour to the nationality and cultural background of the individual. He believed that Arabs, for example, don't mind working extra hours, while other nationalities like Filipinos and Pakistanis do. He stated that individuals from Philippine and Pakistan work like machines and don't care that overtime is needed to deliver a successful product on time. He also stated that Arabs do care and put extra hours whenever there is a need for that even if it is unpaid. The reason, according to the Technical Manager, for their refusal to work extra time is because they are more organized than Arabs and it is part of their culture. He commented that:

*'For us [Arabs] we put extra hour everyday with no pay and we feel ok about that, but they don't, especially the Filipinos ... I guess they are systematic and we [Arabs] are emotional.'* (C6-PA)

When asked about the impact of working long hours on the health of the individuals in the team, he acknowledged that stress, for example, is part of the consequences of working long hours, which in some cases leads to depression. He also stated that:

*'I went through this when I joined the company 14 years ago ... later, I learned that weekend is a weekend ... employees need to spend time with their families and this should be respected ... this is beside the health problems as a result of working long hours.'* (C6-PA)

When asked if the team is ready to work extra hours, the Project B's Project Manager (C1-PB) stated that sometimes the PM is challenged with a certain project and he wants to succeed no matter what. It varies for the individuals and professions. For example, the software developers don't mind putting in extra hours, he added. One interesting point here is that some employees are not married or married but can't bring their families to KSA. In this case the individual will have nothing to do except work, as the Project Manager put it, and the chance to do extra hours is more acceptable than it is for married individuals who have their families with them, in KSA.

The PMO Director (C2-PB) of Project B stated that this issue can be seen to be segregated by nationality. For example, Arab nationals like Jordanians, Lebanese, Syrians and Egyptians don't mind working extra hours, even if they are unpaid. He further explained that these nationalities don't have any problem and they don't count hours. Other nationalities like Filipinos and Indians would resist putting in extra hours, and if they are pushed to do that they will ask for extra money or benefits in return.

The Managing Director (C3-PB) of Project B believed that his teams don't have any problem working extra hours, paid or unpaid. However, he, his PMO Director, and Project Manager believe that long working hours make members of the team lose concentration and this is not good for people who work with their brains and not just hands, in addition to other health problems as well like back pain and vision problems.

The Project C's Project Manager (C1-PC) made it clear that in his company, the team members don't accept to work extra hours and this is because of the intense work they do every day. He explained that when they work 8 hours a day, it means 8 hours a day.

So, they can't work extra hours after that because they are exhausted, and will not even consider paid overtime. The PMO Manager (C2-PC) in Project C believed that 50% only would accept to do extra hours. He also stated that they don't have experience with the consequences of working long hours, but expects that it will introduce hazards and health issues.

When asked if his team is prepared to work extra hours, the Team Leader (C1-PD) in Project D answered that it is unlikely that the project team would be asked to work extra hours, because there is no need for that, unlike in the private sector where they work extra hours to meet deadlines or milestones. He mentioned that it is still possible in some projects that we ask some individuals to put extra hours. He stated that:

*'In our case most of our team members are Saudis and other Arab nationals ... they usually accept to work extra time if needed.'* (C1-PD)

In multi-nationality environments, like KSA, it is not easy to give a statement that applies to everyone in the team. It depends on the individual, some accept to do overtime and some don't. In general, Arab team members accept working extra hours, while Filipinos, for example, don't. The Team Leader explained that in government projects, work is fixed and unlikely that the team is asked to do extra hours. Therefore, the hazard and health concern as a result of over work is very limited.

According to the Project D's Project Manager (C3-PD), the team members are not prepared to working unpaid extra hours unless they are under pressure or get paid for the extra hours. In general, they are not prepared to work extra hours. The Project Manager believed that putting many extra hours in the project is an indication that there is something wrong. In IT projects it is not good to do many extra hours per day, as it affects the brain and make the individual lose concentration. According to the Project Manager, the purpose of doing extra hours in the project is to make up the time lost for various reasons during the life cycle of the project. In the government sector:

*'Paid overtime work is planned before even the project starts.'* (C3-PD)



According to the PMO Director (C4-PD) in Project D, the team is prepared to work extra hours as long as they are paid for that. He added that:

*'It's part of the culture here ... they are looking for paid extra hours to make more money.'* (C4-PD)

According to the PMO Director, the nature of their work is that they are connected to the cultural Attaches all over the world to provide support. Taking into account the difference in time zones they work extra hours (evening and night) to provide the phone and online support. When asked about the hazards and health problems as a result of long work hours, the PMO Director answered that:

*'Health is a concern especially in the IT world where people are under stress because it's a "mental" work that could cause health problems for over-worked people.'* (C4-PD)

### **Data Analysis**

The idea of working long hours is connected to the cultural background of the individuals in the project team. It was proposed that teams are prepared to working long hours, even though hazards and health problems are part of the penalty of doing that.

For the sub-proposition *'project team members are prepared to working extra hours'*, the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.33 and 6.34, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition concerning *'working long hours'* is 46% and 50% in the Private and Public Sector projects, respectively. There are registered Neutral of 36% and 25% for Private and Public Sectors, respectively, leaving the positions of both sectors unclear and with no clear difference between them.

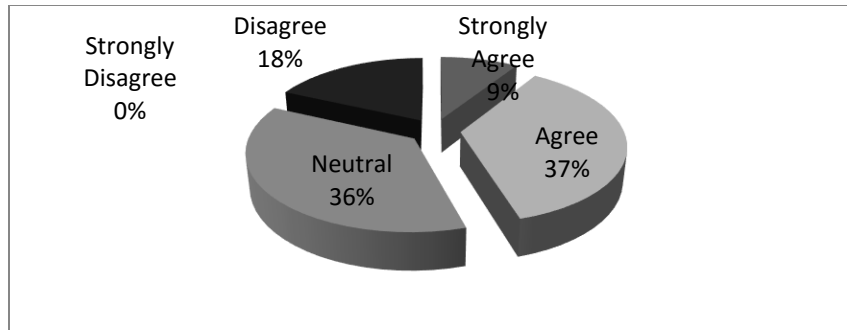


Figure 6.33: Working long hours (**Private Sector**)

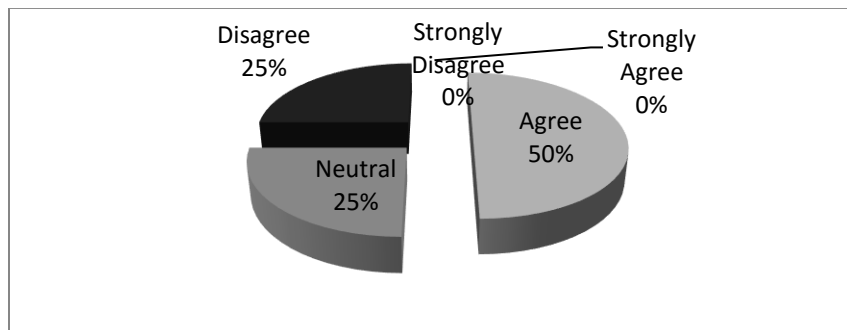


Figure 6.34: Working long hours (**Public Sector**)

In the Private Sector projects some project teams are willing to work extra hours when there is a need, but not everybody in the team would do that. The majority of the respondents in the Private Sector, if not all, acknowledged that working long hours in places like KSA, and especially outdoors in the hot weather, creates health problems. The outside communications work could include working on telecom towers, pulling cables, power lines and so on. Even the IT professional agree that working long hours in front of their computers, and sitting for too long, creates health problems as well.

The willingness to do extra hours also depends on the nationality, according to one of the respondents (C3-PA) in the Private Sector. For example, Arabs are more ready to do extra hours. He believed this is to do with the nationality and the cultural background of the individual. Other nationalities like Filipinos don't accept working overtime, and the reason, as this respondent believes, is that they are more organized than Arabs and it is part of their culture. Another Private Sector respondent (C6-PA) believed that Arabs do care about the project and they are always ready to put in extra hours when there is a

need, even if they are unpaid. The reason according to another respondent is that Arabs are 'emotional' while other nations are 'systematic'.

In the Private Sector projects, even though it is made clear at the kick-off meetings that extra hours may be required at a certain stage of the project, some individuals still resist that unless they are paid. In general, In the Private Sector, Arabs are ready to do extra hours, whether paid or unpaid, while other nationalities are reluctant to accept that. Non-married team members and married team members who can't bring their families to KSA, are also ready to do extra hours.

In Public Sector projects, there is generally no need to do extra hours. As mentioned before, milestones are not an issue and therefore no need to do overtime work to meet deadlines. In Public Sector projects, requests to do over time only happen in rare cases. However, when this happens Arabs, in general, and Saudis in particular, are prepared to do extra hours, especially if they are paid. Other nationalities like Filipinos would not accept overtime work. One interesting comment came from one of the respondents (C3-PD) when he mentioned that in Public Sector projects, paid overtime work is planned and granted to certain individuals in the team even before the project starts. Granting overtime work to certain individuals (even though the government projects don't care about meeting deadlines) comes as rewards to these individuals for being loyal to the boss.

For the sub-proposition '*working extra hours introduce hazards and health risks*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.35 and 6.36, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition concerning 'health risks for working long hours' is 100% for both Private and Public Sector projects, indicating clear positions for both sectors. In the government projects, work is fixed and since it is unlikely that the team is asked to do extra hours, the hazard and health concern as a result of over work is very limited.

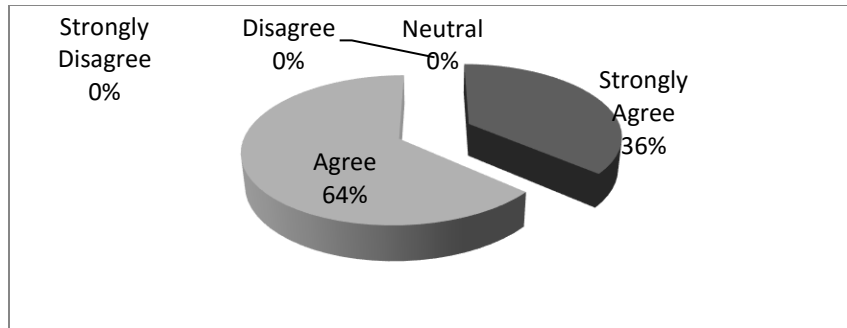


Figure 6.35: Health risks for working long hours (**Private Sector**)

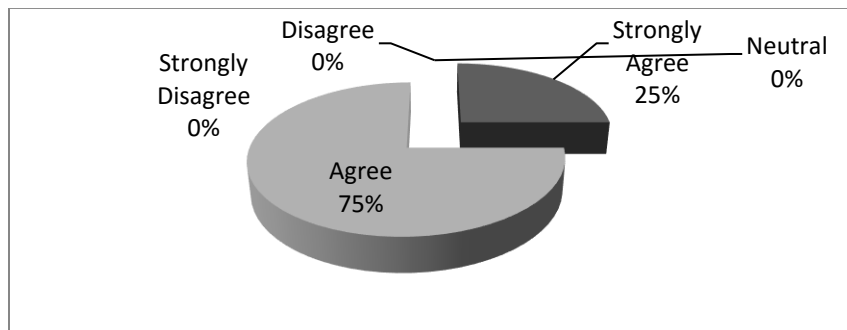


Figure 6.36: Health risks for working long hours (**Public Sector**)

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following theme was identified:

- *Working long hours* (Private and Public Sectors)

### 6.3.10 Maintaining Friendly Relationship

The tenth proposition (*Maintaining friendly relationships between workers positively impacts effective communication management*) was introduced to investigate the existence of the relationship within the team and whether it improves communication. This proposition is analysed through two questions: does a friendly relationship exist between the individuals of the team? And does maintaining this friendly relationship improve communication within the team? It was proposed that this phenomenon has a positive impact on communication management.

The Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA) understands the importance of keeping good relationships within the team. From his daily observations, he thinks that friendly relationships seem to be there during the day (work hours), but this only extends to working hours. He did not see this as a problem.

When asked about the impact of good relationships on the work, he stated that good relationship does not necessarily serve the work. In fact, very close relationships between the team members could negatively affect their productivity.

The Team Leader (C2-PA) in Project A acknowledged that good relationships exist within the team, and it impacts positively communication between the team members. He also pointed out that it is always the responsibility of the PM to make sure it continues that way.

One Project Engineer (C3-PA) in Project A expressed that relationships have to be friendly within the team. For example, having one team member who is not friendly with his colleagues could ruin or poison the work environment. He stated that:

*'I always make sure and assume that my team enjoys friendly relationships.'*  
(C3-PA)

He also mentioned that he is close to his team, and he always try to solve clashes between them on the spot and in a friendly way. He pays attention to keeping friendly relations between his team and the sub-contractors' teams. He further explained that:

*'I believe all stakeholders have to have good and healthy working relationships.'*  
(C3-PA)

Some PMs adopt the policy of keeping the team members apart by creating and maintaining conflicts between them, so they don't like each other and for sure don't trust each other, according to another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A. He pointed out that:

*'He does that because he believed this will give him better control over his team, and will never lobby against him.'* (C4-PA)

He also believed that communication will improve as a result of good relationships within the team. Another project engineer stated that the team members are usually friendly, and part of his job is to make sure they are friendly.

In some cases, personal problems appear on the surface between the individuals within the team, according to the Technical Manager (C6-PA) of Project A. In general, the team members who have good relationships and can work together are usually selected, the Technical Manager added. He further explained that even that does not guarantee good relationships will continue as problems sometimes start while they are working on the project. He believed this is not an issue as long as they understand their responsibilities.

The Technical Manager agrees that good relationship improves communication in the project. He acknowledged that this is very important and he always makes sure it happens. He believed that personal relationship is part of the work system, and it always improves communication between the team members which will work for the benefit of the project. He commented that:

*'At the end of the day we are not machines, and we have to have good relationships between the PM and the team and between the team members and with the customers as well.'* (C6-PA)

Good communication skills can professionally resolve any conflict within the team, according to the Project B's Project Manager (C1-PB). He believed that friendly relationships within the team opens and maintains the communication channels between the team members.

The PMO Director (C2-PB) of project B revealed that he always makes sure the family spirit exists in the team. He added that on the social side, the families of the team members are socializing during the activities, such as the outdoor barbecues that they organize every now and then.

According to the Managing Director (C3-PB) in Project B, the most important factor in his team success is the good relationships. He added that he personally goes out with

the PMs to lunch, and sometimes they have gathering at the company (with no special occasion) and have snacks and pasties. He believed that this makes work easier for everybody in the company. He noted that:

*'When you have good relationship with your people you get a full answer to any question or concern i.e. no one will hide information from you as a result of bad relationships.'* (C3-PB)

The Project C's Project Manager (C1-PC) believed that relationship within the team is friendly, while the PMO Manager (C2-PC) in the same project believed that it is friendly in some cases, but mostly it is not that friendly because they are forced to do the job at a very short notice. He explained that many of his customers never plan the work and they, all of a sudden, request a certain change to be incorporated in the project (and could be complex) in a short period of time. So the management pushes the team for the time the customer wants to meet and they end up with a team with unfriendly relationship between its members.

Both managers agree that friendly relationships have positive impact on the work. They also agree that it should not be too friendly; otherwise it will negatively impact the project.

Relationships are mostly friendly within the team, according to the Team Leader (C1-PD) in Project D. He also stated that communication within the team and between the boss and the team is in a good shape. He believed that the team members are not competing against each other trying to prove their competency. In the government organizations employees can rest assure that their jobs are guaranteed forever, and that explains the good relationships they enjoy, as he put it.

The Project D's Project Manager (C3-PD) disagrees with his Team Leader. He stated that he does not see the friendly relationships especially if the responsibilities are not well defined where everyone claims he did a good job. This will make the 'ego' or the sense of the 'self-importance' appear on the surface resulting in unfriendly relationships, as he explained.

## Data Analysis

According to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) Arab nations (including Saudis) are considered closer to the feminine side than the masculine side in that they care about establishing and maintaining friendly relationships with others. It was proposed that friendly relationships are maintained with the boss and within the team. It was hypothesized that this friendly relationship improves communication and help towards a successful project.

For the sub-proposition '*friendly relationships are maintained between members of project team*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors are shown in Figure 6.37 and 6.38, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition concerning 'health risks for working long hours' is 73% and 100% for Private and Public Sector projects, respectively. There is some Disagreement to this sub-proposition in the Private Sector projects and this is because (as was put by one respondent) the relationships are friendly in some cases, but mostly they are not, because teams are forced to do the job at a very short notice. So the management pushes the team for the time the customer wants to meet and they end up with a team with unfriendly relationship between its members. The 100% Agreement in the Public Sector concurs with Bjerke and Al-Meer's assertion (see above) and may also be because team members are not competing against each other, therefore maintaining friendly relationships is easier.

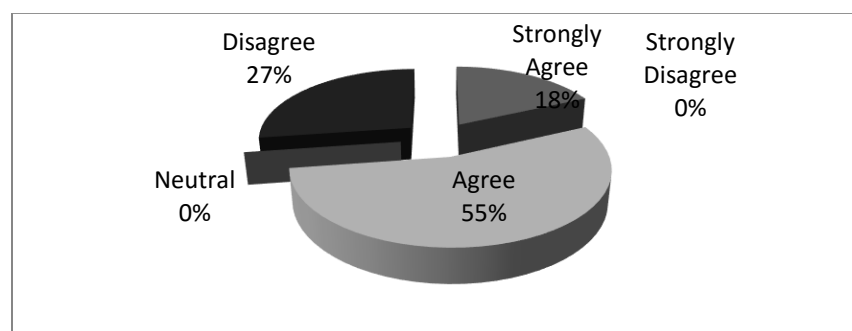


Figure 6.37: Maintaining friendly relationships (**Private Sector**)



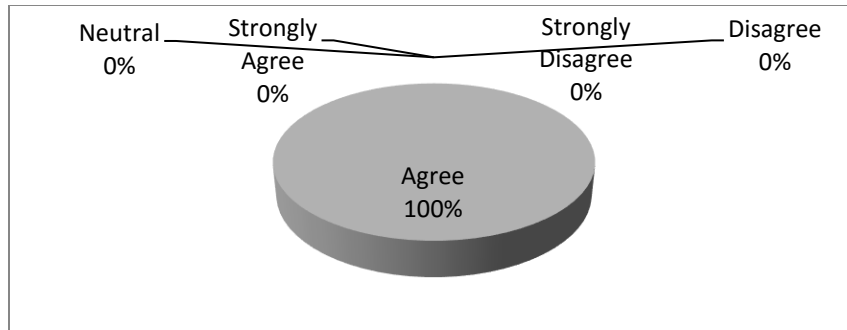


Figure 6.38: Maintaining friendly relationships (**Public Sector**)

In the Private Sector projects friendly relationships between the boss and the team and within the team are established and maintained by the project teams. Based on the majority of the respondents, this good relationship is essential in opening communication channels for the team. A few project managers operating in the Private Sector stated that they are very friendly with their teams and usually stay close to them so they are aware of any technical or management issue that may arise. In Private Sector projects the general policy for the project manager is to choose the members of the team that he thinks have good relationship between them and can work together. However, this is not always enough to avoid the occasional onset of problems during the project.

Some respondents in the Private Sector made a point about the possibility of relationships being *too* friendly between team members. They believe that having very close relationship between the certain team members does not serve the project well and could affect productivity and in some cases lead to people covering for one another's mistakes. According to one respondent (C4-PA) from the Private Sector, some project managers 'play politics' and adopt the policy of keeping their team members apart by creating and maintaining conflicts between them. The aim here is to create dislike and mistrust between the team members so that the team are better controlled by the boss.

In the Public Sector project relationships are mostly friendly within the team and between the boss and the team. The reason is that the team members are not competing against each other in trying to prove their competency. In fact, in the

government organization employees can rest assured that their jobs are guaranteed forever, and that explains the relaxed relationships they enjoy in this respect.

One respondent (C3-PD) operating in the Public Sector did not see the friendly relationships especially if responsibilities are not well defined and where everyone claims he did a good job. This makes the sense of the 'self-importance' come to the surface, resulting in unfriendly relationships, he explained.

For the sub-proposition '*maintaining friendly relationships between team members improves communication within the team*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors are shown in Figures 6.39 and 6.40, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition is 100% for both Private and Public Sector projects.

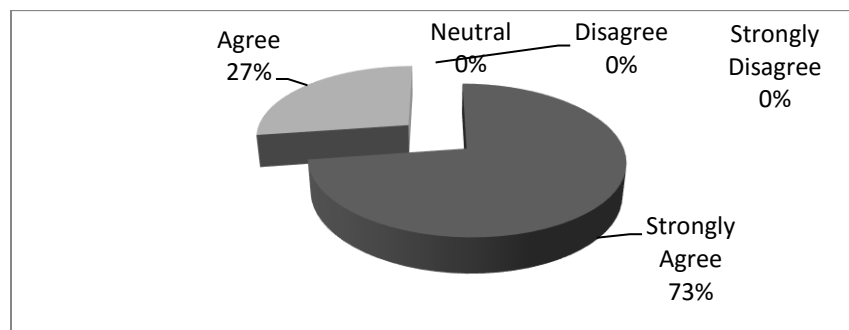


Figure 6.39: Improving communication with friendly relationships (**Priv. Sec.**)

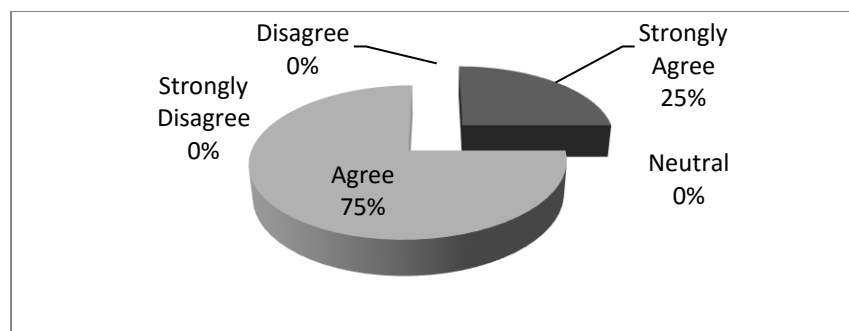


Figure 6.40: Improving communication with friendly relationships (**Pub. Sec.**)

Islam is reflected in the behaviour of the Arab Nations' culture (see Kavoossi, 2000). The findings of this study concur with Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) study when he argued

that Islam teaches its followers to stay close and co-operate with other Muslims and 'to be there for their happiness and sadness'.

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following theme was identified as important:

- *Maintaining friendly relationship* (Private and Public Sectors)

### **6.3.11 Adaptation to Circumstances**

The eleventh proposition (*Fast adaptation of workers to changing circumstances is positively associated with integration management*) was introduced to study the adaptation to the new changes in the project and its effect on the success or failure of the project. This proposition is studied based on two questions: *do individuals in project teams adapt fast to new circumstances? And does this fast adaptation contribute to the success of the project?* It was proposed that this phenomenon has a positive impact on the success of the project.

The project team have the ability to adapt to new circumstances such as working in a far-off or unplanned location, according to the Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA). This is an important step towards the success of the project, he added. The Team Leader (C2-PA) in project A believed that it depends on what the circumstances are and it also differs from one individual to another. But in general, adapting to new circumstances usually contributes to the success of the project. He gave the following example:

*'For example, if the project is moved physically to a new location ... in this case I can't force the team to accept that, but in general the team would accommodate new circumstances.'* (C2-PA)

One Project Engineer (C3-PA) in project A stated that his team understands that circumstances may change and he gave an example that the team work for 60 hours a week because they are trying to meet the deadline. He mentioned that he always makes sure from the start of the project that his team is prepared to work in hard

environments. It happened in one of his projects at the Ministry of Interior (MOI) where he had to send some team members to Tabuk (about 1,300 km North West of Riyadh) and it was during the holidays (Eid Al-Fitr) to install a video conference system to secure a link between the MOI and the Prince (Minister of Interior). He added that:

*‘Sometimes you get an apology from a team member for not being able to adapt to such new circumstances, but the majority of my team would accept these changes of circumstances.’ (C3-PA)*

Another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A commented that technical people would adapt faster than the rest of the team to new circumstances. He also believed that fast adaptation would help in achieving a successful project.

One more Project Engineer (C5-PA) in Project A stated that the project team would accept new circumstances because they have trust in their boss and they know that the boss would not ask any of them to travel 500km, for example, to do or fix something, unless there is a need to do that. The Technical Manager (C6-PA) of project A agreed with his project manager and engineers that this fast adaptation is an important factor in the success of the project.

When asked about whether the team adapts to new circumstances easily or not, the Project B’s Project Manager (C1-PB) answered by emphasizing that his team do. Not accepting adaptation to new circumstances will impact the project, the market share and company strategic goals, he added.

The PMO Director (C2-PB) of Project B acknowledged that he faces problems in having his team adapt to new circumstances. He commented that ‘change’ for them causes a shock. To overcome this issue, he will need to play some politics in order to recover, as he put it. He added that:

*‘You need to explain or give them a brief on the benefits they will get from this change of circumstances.’ (C2-PB)*

The Managing Director (C3-PB) in Project B stated that when his employees feel that there is a change in circumstances they start asking questions as why this change is

happening and what is the expected impact on them directly, and when they understand the reasons they accept them.

The Project C's Project Manager (C1-PC) believed that his team is used to new and changing circumstances. He also believed that this will contribute to the overall success of the project.

According to the PMO Manager (C2-PC) in Project C, some of the team members are 'active' and this type would do anything and ready and can adapt to new circumstances easily. He noted that:

*'We have the other type that is 'less active' ... this type does not adapt easily.'*  
(C2-PC)

Saudi nationals prefer not to change and to adapt to new circumstances, unless there is a clear and direct benefit from this change, according to the Team Leader (C1-PD) in Project D. The Project Engineer (C2-PD) of Project D believed that it depends on the nationality of the team member, as some of these members accept changes of circumstances and some don't.

Especially in the government projects, changes of circumstances are not welcomed, as explained by the Project Manager (C3-PD) in Project D. It is part of the culture that people are more comfortable with their current situations, and as a result they would resist any change. He explained that if, for instance, the PM need to send an individual to a certain place to do something related to the project, the team member will come up with tens of excuses for not being able to go. He explained that:

*'In other words they would like to do what they're used to doing and they would not accept changes in the circumstances easily.'* (C3-PD)

### **Data Analysis**

KSA was not part of the original study by Hofstede (1980) on Short/Long Term Orientation. In Short-Term Orientation cultures, employees lean towards adapting to new conditions and absorb and deal with any negative outcome. It was proposed that

project teams adapt fast to new circumstances, and this fast adaptation contributes to the success of the project.

For the sub-proposition '*members of project team adapt fast to new circumstances*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.41 and 6.42, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition is 82% and 25% respectively for Private and Public Sector projects. The result, in the case of the Private Sector, indicates a clear desire to adapt to new circumstances. The result in the Public Sector reflects a moderate (taking into account that 25% registered Neutral) resistance to new circumstances at work.

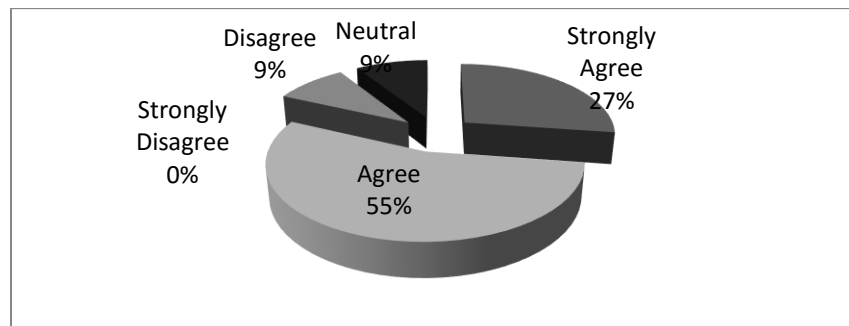


Figure 6.41: Adaptation to circumstances (**Private Sector**)

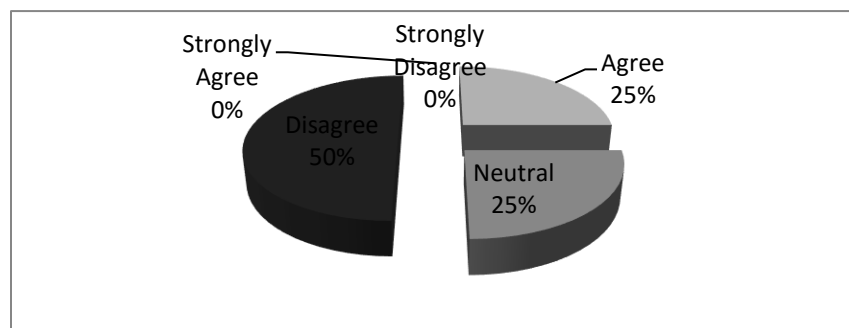


Figure 6.42: Adaptation to circumstances (**Public Sector**)

The majority of the respondents in the Private Sector projects stated that fast adaptation to new circumstances contributes to the success of the project. In general, everybody accepts changes in the circumstance and adapts fast for the benefit of the project. It happens that sometimes you get an apology from a team member for not being able to

adapt to a sudden change, but the majority of the teams do. In the Private Sector projects technical team members seem to adapt faster than the rest of the team to the new and unexpected changes.

As explained by one of the respondents (C5-PA) in the Private Sector, the project team would accept the sudden change and adapt to it because they have trust in their project manager, and they know that he would not ask them to accept something that would harm their interests.

In some cases, employees would question the change and show concern about the benefits that it brings (to them and to the project), however, once they understand they accept the change. One of the respondents (C2-PB) in the Private Sector acknowledged that he faced problems in having his team adapt to new circumstances in some of the previous projects. He commented that 'change' for them causes a shock. To overcome this issue, the project manager will need to play some politics. In general, some of the team members are 'active' and this type would do anything and ready and can adapt to new circumstances easily, as opposed to the other type that is 'less active' that does not adapt easily.

It appears that Saudi nationals operating in the Public Sector projects would resist any change in circumstances. Based on the view of one interviewee (C1-PD), they would not adapt quickly to a new change, unless there is a clear and direct benefit from that change. Changes in the Public Sector projects are not welcomed. It is part of the culture that people are more comfortable with their current situation, and as a result they would resist any change.

For the sub-proposition *'fast adaptation to new working environments contributes to the overall success of the project'*, the results of the questionnaire in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.43 and 6.44, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition concerning 'contribution to project success for fast adaptation' is 100% for both Private and Public Sector projects,

indicating clear positions for both sectors. The results show a total agreement of the benefits of adapting to new circumstances, even from the ICT professionals of the Public Sector.

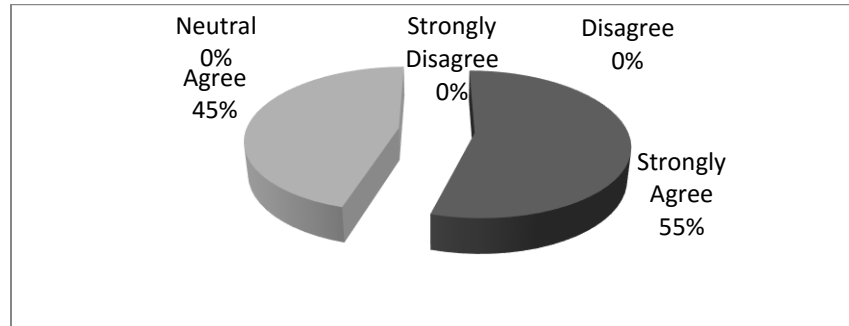


Figure 6.43: Contribution to project success for fast adaptation (**Private Sector**)

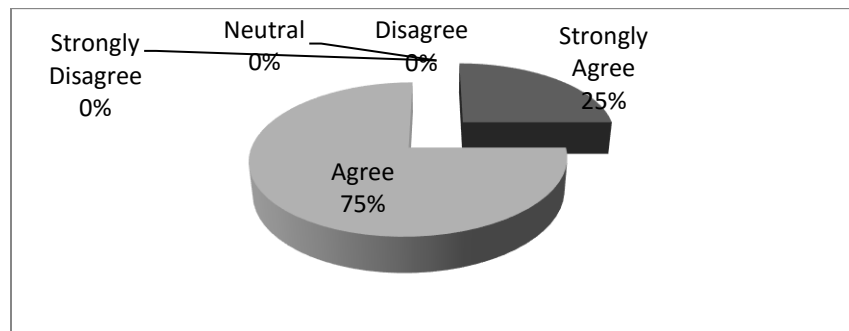


Figure 6.44: Contribution to project success for fast adaptation (**Public Sector**)

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following themes were identified:

- *Adaptation to circumstances* (Private Sector)
- *Resistance to new circumstances* (Public Sector)

### 6.3.12 Staying in Jobs Despite Dissatisfaction

The twelfth proposition (*Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction is negatively associated with efficient human resources management*) was introduced to investigate the idea of staying in jobs when not satisfied and its impact on human resources management. This proposition is studied by asking two questions: do project team members prefer to



stay in jobs despite dissatisfaction? And does that create challenge to the project management? It was proposed that this phenomenon has a negative impact on the human resources management.

According to the Project A's Project Manager (C1-PA) Part of human nature is to stay in job waiting for better chances somewhere else. People keep in hand what they have until they get what they are after, he explained.

When asked about the impact of such behaviour, he explained that he experienced this in one of his projects, where the unsatisfied employee sat at work counting hours with no real productivity. This for sure affects the project, he believed.

The Team Leader (C2-PA) of Project A believed that this happens because of the work rules in KSA and the 'Iqama'<sup>2</sup> issues. He explained that it is expected that if the employee is not satisfied with his job then he will find another employer to sponsor him before he can leave his current job because transferring sponsorship from one employer to another is very hard and that's why the unsatisfied employee would stay at his job even if he does not like it. When that happens then loyalty and productivity are questioned as further explained.

This Project Engineer (C3-PA) in Project A believed that his team is out there because they are willing to work and produce. He added that:

*'The moment they accepted to be part of this project I assumed they are satisfied with their jobs.'* (C3-PA)

A person who is not satisfied with his job will have no motivation to work and produce what he's expected to produce and this creates problems to management, according to this Project Engineer.

Another Project Engineer (C4-PA) in Project A believed that this happens when they don't have other opportunities, and once they get the chance they'll leave immediately. He commented that:

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<sup>2</sup> 'Iqama' is a residence permit issued (by the Saudi Ministry of Labour) to those expatriates who arrive in KSA on an employment visa.

*'Working without a passion will not produce acceptable results.'*(C4-PA)

The Technical Manager (C6-PA) of Project A believed that individuals, with different backgrounds, behave differently. He is convinced that by having many nationalities in the team, some individuals would accept anything and stay in the team, and some others (ambitious) would like to explore other opportunities somewhere else. He gave an example that Arab team members would leave if they don't like the job, and go and look for other opportunities, while, for example, Filipinos stay in the job even if they don't like it, as long it provides security and stability.

*'Unsatisfied team members staying in the job leads to de-motivation which impacts the project and creates problems to the management.'* (C6-PA)

The Project B's Project Manager (C1-PB) believed that whether the team member stays in job, despite dissatisfaction, or not, depends on the individual. If he is ambitious he would leave his current job (if he does not like it) and look for better chances, according to the Project Manager. This is what happens in the private sector. The Project Manager explained that in the government sector, the unsatisfied individual will stay even if he does not like his job because there is no loyalty to the organization and because of the low productivity (as he mentioned earlier, with an exception of the government entities where the maturity is high).

The 'Iqama' is a problem, especially in KSA, according to Project B's PMO Director (C2-PB). He believed that not being able to move from one job to another gives the job stability. He also believed employers are lucky to have this situation where employees can't just walk away from their jobs.

Being an IT professional is different from being an accountant, for example, based on the managing director. Accounting jobs are not that available comparing to the IT jobs. In the IT sector, many people leave their jobs and look for better opportunities, he explained. He stated that every year they have about 20% of their employees leave their jobs. So taking this into account, the Managing Director (C3-PB) of Project B assumed whoever stays at his job is satisfied. He also believed that at the end what

important and what makes people stay at their jobs is not only the salary but also the feeling of being comfortable with the people and place where he works. He noted that:

*'I'll give you an example, this year we had 5 employees came and asked to be employed back after they resigned from this company about 4 years ago.'* (C3-PB)

The Project Manager, the PMO Director, and the Managing Director agree that staying in job despite dissatisfaction could challenge the management.

The Project C's Project Manager (C1-PC) does not believe that his team members would stay at their jobs if they are not satisfied. He stated that:

*'They would leave the job if they don't like it.'* (C1-PC)

The PMO Manager (C2-PC) in Project C believed that it differs from one person to another. He mentioned that he has some employees working for the company for the past 15 years and still there. He stated that the expectation is that whoever is not satisfied with his job would usually leave usually.

When asked about the possible challenge to the management when an unsatisfied employee stays at his job, he stated that the damage would occur especially since it is not easy to terminate the unsatisfied individual, and by the time it happens, more damage and challenge to the management could be expected.

In this country (KSA) it is very hard for non-Saudis to transfer from one employer's sponsorship to another. The 'Iqama' is a big issue because the KSA labour regulations would not allow an employee to move from one employer to another without the permission of the ex-employer. For this reason, as explained by the Team Leader (C1-PD) of project D, non-Saudi employees stay in jobs even if they are unsatisfied. For Saudi nationals, the 'Iqama' is not an issue and they tend to move between jobs more easily than non-Saudis.

*'I have witnessed some Saudis in my previous projects that decided to move to another job for very small amount of extra money.'* (C1-PD)

When asked about staying at the job despite dissatisfaction, the Project D's Project Manager (C3-PD) acknowledged that most people do that, including his team. He believed that this will have negative impact on the job which will appear as this phenomenon spreads more and more. One of the consequences of having employees staying at their positions, when they are satisfied, is they become less productive, and possible not productive at all, in some cases. As result of that his evaluation by his boss will be negative and when the employee sees his negative evaluation he becomes even worse at the job, as explained by the Project Manager. He explained that in the government sector no one can easily exercise his power and kick the non-productive and non-satisfied employee out. He explained further that:

*'This employee can't be punished for the negative attitude towards the project, and when the project is done he goes back to his functional unit and sits there and continues doing nothing.'* (C3-PD)

The Project Manager does not believe that this kind of employees is a challenge to the project management. He thinks that the project management in his organization is not active enough to have this challenge. For example, if there is a resource (team member) in the project who does not produce, the PM can ask for two people to join the team and replace the unsatisfied and unproductive individual. He commented that:

*'I don't see the team member who is not satisfied with his job as a challenge.'* (C3-PD)

The PMO Director (C4-PD) in Project D believed that many people leave their jobs when they face new circumstances (changes) in the work environment. So they would not stay at their jobs if they are not satisfied. What encourages people to leave when they are not satisfied is the lack of effective evaluation of employees at the government organizations. It is a challenge to the management where the manager can't really reward hard working people and punish lazy and non-productive people. According to the Team Leader, Project Engineer, and PMO Director, the unsatisfied team member will never make the required effort, and this is a challenge to the management.

## Data Analysis

It was proposed that team members would stay at their current jobs even if they are not satisfied. When that happens, the project manager is expected to face challenges which in turn could impact the project.

For the sub-proposition '*project team members prefer to stay in jobs even when they are not satisfied*', the results of the questionnaire in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.45 and 6.46, respectively. For Private Sector projects, the chart below shows that Disagreement and Strong Disagreement is 55%.. The Public Sector projects registered a 75% Agreement and Strong Agreement.

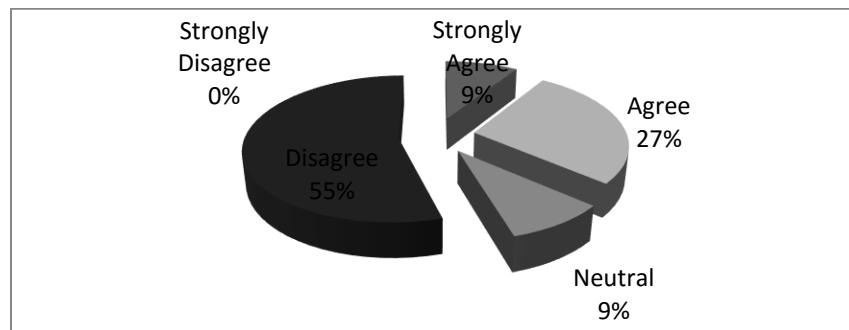


Figure 6.45: Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction (**Private Sector**)

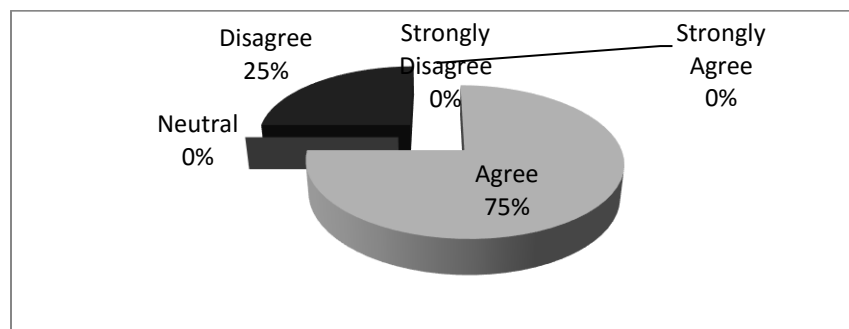


Figure 6.46: Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction (**Public Sector**)

In the Private Sector Projects in KSA, if a non-Saudi employee is not satisfied with his job then he will need to find another employer to sponsor him before he can leave his current job. Transferring sponsorship from one employer to another is very hard and that's why the unsatisfied employee stays at his job even if he is not satisfied. When an

employee is not satisfied he will have no motivation to work and produce what he's expected to produce and this creates problems to management.

According to one respondent (C1-PB) in the Private Sector projects, some employees would accept anything and stay in the team, while others who are ambitious would like to explore other opportunities somewhere else. In general, Arab team members would leave if they didn't like the job and look for other opportunities, while, for example, Filipinos stay in the job even if they don't like it, as long it provides security and stability. According to one respondent (C6-PA), staying in the job despite dissatisfaction, leads to de-motivation in the team which impacts the project and creates problems to the management. Staying in the job despite dissatisfaction causes damage to the project and the company, especially that it is not easy to terminate the unsatisfied individual, and by the time this happens, more damage and challenge to the management will be expected.

According to one respondent (C3-PA) in the Private Sector, the expectation is that whoever is not satisfied with his job would leave immediately. According to another respondent (C3-PB), many employees in the IT business leave their jobs and look for better opportunities, somewhere else. He stated that it is normal to see about 20% changing jobs every year. So the assumption is that whoever stays at his job is satisfied.

The respondents in the Public Sector projects distinguished between Saudi and non-Saudi nationals in their reply to this question. For non-Saudis, the work licence ('Iqama') is a big issue because the KSA labour regulations would not allow an employee to move from one employer to another without the permission of the ex-employer. For this reason, non-Saudi employees tend to stay in jobs even if they are unsatisfied. For Saudi nationals, the 'Iqama' is not an issue and they tend to move between jobs more easily than non-Saudis.

One of the respondents (C3-PD) in the Public Sector believed that the unsatisfied project team members are not a challenge to the management. For example, if there is a resource (team member) in the project not producing, the PM can ask for his

replacement by another, or even two people (the reason that the resource can be increased is that in the public sector there is a surplus of potential employees).

For the sub-proposition '*staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction creates challenges to the management*', the results of the questionnaire, in the Private and Public Sectors, are shown in Figures 6.47 and 6.48, respectively. The charts below show that the Agreement and Strong Agreement to the sub-proposition concerning 'staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction' is 100% and 75% for Private and Public Sector projects, respectively.

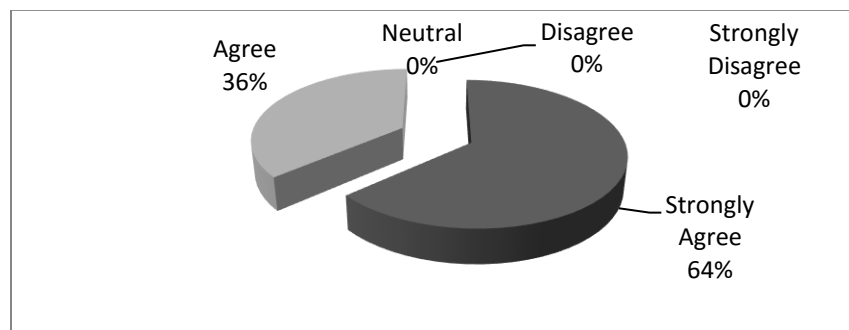


Figure 6.47: Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction (**Private Sector**)

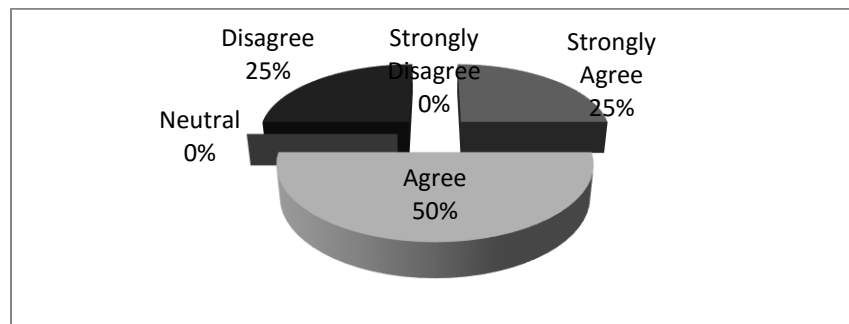


Figure 6.48: Challenges to management when unsatisfied (**Public Sector**)

One of the consequences of having employees staying in their positions when they are dissatisfied is they become less productive, and possibly not productive at all in some cases. In the Public Sector, such an employee can't be punished for the negative attitude towards the project, and when the project is done he goes back to his functional unit and sits there and continues doing nothing.

Based on the data analysis for both Private and Public Sector projects, the following themes were identified:

- *Leaving jobs when unsatisfied* (Private Sector)
- *Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction* (Public Sector)

A summary of the data which represent the answers of the 15 respondents (split into 4 different cases) answering 24 statements are shown in Appendices 4 and 5.



# CHAPTER SEVEN: DISCUSSIONS AND IMPLICATIONS

## 7.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter will examine the main findings from *Chapter 6*. It will discuss the themes extracted from the interviews and highlight the similarities and differences between private and public sector respondents. It will also relate the findings to the literature review in the previous chapters. A revised framework for the impact of national culture on project management will be developed based on the new findings. Finally, the framework will be validated.

## 7.2 THE INFLUENCE OF HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS

Based on Hofstede (1991) Arabs as a group are described to have '*large power distance, relatively strong uncertainty avoidance, high collectivism, and moderate masculinity/femininity*'. Arabs were not included in the study of the fifth and sixth cultural dimensions (long term orientation and indulgence). As Appendix 3 shows, Hofstede work presented the scores of 5 dimensions of 23 countries (excluding KSA) and the scores of 4 dimensions of 46 countries (including KSA)' (Shi and Wang, 2011, p. 94). The following sections will try to link the results (that came out of this study) to the literature review in *Chapters 2, 3, 4 & 5*.

### ***High Power Distance***

The Power Distance Index (PDI), according to Hofstede (2010), is '*the extent to which the less powerful members of organizations and institutions within a country expect and accept that power is distributed unequally*'. This study has demonstrated that PDI has influences on the following six independent variables: *Fearing the boss, Relationship dominance over tasks, blindly following instructions, slow decision making process, protection in return for loyalty and maintaining friendly relationship*. These independent variables represent 50% of the total number of variables used in this study. This emphasizes the point that PDI is a very important cultural dimension. In fact, as Dicksons et al. (2003) argue, PDI is one of the most powerful cultural dimensions in project management.

Hofstede (1980) only included six Arab nations in his original study, and KSA was not one of them. In his later work (Hofstede, 1991), KSA was added increasing the number of Arab nations to seven. However, according to Cassell and Black (2011), KSA was not studied as an individual nation; rather, Hofstede's findings were generalized on all Arab nations. According to Hofstede (2010), KSA's score was 95 (on a scale between 1 and 120). According to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) the KSA score on Power Distance Index is 73, which is considered relatively high (for example, other Islamic nations such as Turkey and Iran scored lower than 73).

From the data collected in this study, it can be seen that subordinates in public sector projects fear their superiors while in the private sector, subordinates show respect rather than fear. The difference between the two sectors' projects is that ICT professionals in the private sector are employed based on their education, experience and competency in their field, while in most cases the public ICT professionals are employed based on favours and loyalty. Therefore, project team members in the public sector fear their bosses, unlike in the case of the private sector. This has direct impact on communication between the project manager and his team and within the team itself. In the private sector, communication is open and direct, while in the public sector it is the opposite. According to Wu et al., (2001), the 'indirect and passive' communication styles are related to the 'avoiding and obliging' conflict resolution styles. This is more common in collectivistic environments, while the 'indirect and active' styles are more apparent in individualistic nations (Wu et al., 2001). The result of this study in the case of the public sector projects concurs with Zaharna (1995), who argued that *indirect communication* is the Arab cultural preference, but it should be noted that the present study is at odds with Zaharna in the case of the private sector projects investigated.

The high score on the Power Distance Index is in certain societies a clear demonstration that these societies (and KSA would be a case in point) recognize and accept the inequality of power and wealth (Hofstede, 1980). Saudi society, according to Hofstede (1980) expects and accepts that managers or group leaders distinguish themselves from the rest. Islamic teachings and Arab traditions promote the acceptance

of 'authority and status hierarchy' (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993). Islam is based on justice, not equality. For example, KSA society distinguishes between the members of the society, men and women: men and women are not considered equal and they have different roles in life to play.

One important outcome from this study is the agreement of both public and private sector ICT professionals that *work is more important than relationship*. This contradicts one of the propositions in this study, namely, that relationship is more important than the task itself. This preference of task over relationship benefits the quality of work produced.

As noted earlier in *Chapter 3*, Islamic teachings encourage superiors to consult with their subordinates. Aaya 159 from Surah Al-Imran in the holy Quarn states:

فَاعْفُ عَنْهُمْ وَاسْتَغْفِرْ لَهُمْ وَشَاوِرْهُمْ فِي الْأَمْرِ

This Aaya translates to:

‘...So pardon them, and ask forgiveness for them; and consult them in the affairs...’  
(Aaya 159, Surah Al-Imran, Sura, Holy Quran)

For high PDI cultures, Hofstede (1984) argues that subordinates depend heavily on their superiors and are expected to follow instructions of their superiors accepting autocratic or paternalistic behaviour as a way of exercising the leadership. Based on Hofstede's findings, an assumption was made that subordinates follow instructions blindly with no question asked. The present study suggests that this proposition was wrong, at least in the context of the ICT industry. It may work this way in other industries, but not in the ICT industry. Both private and public sector ICT professionals stated that they can't work this way, as instructions and orders have to be clarified to a very small level of detail before execution. A programmer can't start writing and developing his software without a 100% understanding of how he is going to go from one logical set to another. This conflicts with Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) who stated that in high PDI cultures, like KSA, managers make decisions 'autocratically and paternalistically'.

In the 'paternalistic' and 'non-participative' management styles that are supposedly common in high PDI cultures, superiors don't consult with their subordinates before taking decisions. The top-down approach is commonly used. Thus, according to Muna (1980), 'joint decision-making' is not a preferred strategy among Arab managers, in their work place. Pascale (1978) argues that in a high power distance environment, a non-participative leadership style is used, and this concurs with Hofstede's (2001) view that leaders in high power distance cultures do not consult with their subordinates before taking decisions. This study has demonstrated that while this is the case in the public sector, it is less clear in the private sector. Decisions related to financial issues are usually slow and are taken at higher management levels. Decisions related to technical issues are usually taken faster, in both public and private sectors. In general, however, decisions are made slowly, and one important reason is because some managers, especially in the public sector, are technically weak, and would not make decisions that can be held accountable for. Instead they rely on committees to take decisions for them which slows the process of making decisions down impacting time, cost and procurement in the project.

Based on Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993), a high score on PDI is an indication of the social gap between superiors and subordinates. Obeidat et al. (2012) stated that one important reason for Arab Nations scoring high on PDI is that favours, not competency, is what decisions are based on, in the Arab World: thus explaining why loyalty is a key issue.

This study has demonstrated that superiors in private sector projects, protect their subordinates in return for *professionalism*, while, in public sector projects, superiors protect their subordinates in return for *loyalty*. So loyalty and favours are two key issues in the public sector business. This has negative impact on the management of the project team, as it can create feelings of injustice within the team.

In the case of the private sector, it can be argued that protection of subordinates by their superiors in return for *professionalism* can be classified as what some scholars refer to: *top management support*. Scholars like Pinto and Slevin (1987), Hyväri (2006),

McComb et al. (2008), Boonstra (2013), and Almajed and Mayhew (2013) have listed *top management support* as one of the most important success factors in project management. In fact, Almajed and Mayhew (2013) concluded that *top 'management support and commitment'* is the top of the list of the Critical Success Factors (CSF) in the public sector IT projects in KSA. Furthermore, Young and Jordan (2008), based on five case studies have demonstrated that *top management support* is the most important factor for project success.

### ***Low Individualism***

Individualism (IDV), according to Hofstede (2010) *'is the degree to which individuals are integrated into groups'*. According to Hofstede (2010), KSA's score was 25 (on a scale between 1 and 120). According to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) study, KSA scored 41 on the individualism index. Therefore, it can be classified as a collectivist nation. Arab nations are known for being gregarious: they tend to live in groups (Bjerke and Al-Meer, 1993).

Extended families in collectivist cultures like KSA are used to protecting the individuals who belong to these families or groups (Hofstede, 2010). Belonging to certain groups and showing loyalty to the boss provides protection to these individuals at work. The results of this study demonstrated that project team members, in private and public sectors, give preference for task over relationship. Giving preference for task over relationship enhances the chance of producing a product with an acceptable quality. This result contradicts with Hofstede (2010), who argued that in such cultures relationships are more important than the task itself.

As noted earlier, like high PDI, low IDV is related to loyalty. In private sector, employees are protected in return for being professional, while in public sector they are protected for being loyal to the boss. Part of the nature of low IDV cultures is that employees belong to social, ethnical, religious or national groups which make them feel more secure. There is an old say in the Arab World *'if you don't belong to someone with power, acquire yourself one'*. This shows how much belonging to a group is important for Arabs. Belonging to a group means loyalty. This result accords with Hunt and At-

Twajri, 1996), in the case of the private sector projects, when they argue that Saudi managers' values are based on Islam, and therefore they show an inclination towards individualism.

### ***High Uncertainty Avoidance***

The Uncertainty Avoidance Index (UAI), according to Hofstede (2010), *'indicates to what extent a culture programs its members to feel either uncomfortable or comfortable in unstructured situations'*. PDI and UAI are related to project management as they help explaining how power is distributed and how outcomes are made predictable. Uncertainty avoidance is affected by religion. Muslims believe that God is in full control of everything, and that 'time' is in God's hand.

According to Hofstede (2010), KSA's score was 80 (on a scale between 1 and 120) indicating a high level of intolerance to ambiguity and changes in life and workplace by minimizing the occurrence of unknown and unusual circumstances. According to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993), KSA has scored 74 on the uncertainty avoidance index. Based on Hofstede (1991), Arabs have relatively strong UAI. Strong uncertainty avoidance cultures would not accept inherited uncertainty in life. To them it is considered a continuous threat and has to be fought, as per Hofstede (2011). He argued that strong uncertainty avoidance means intolerance of deviant people and ideas. That means any person or idea will be looked at as dangerous if they are different from what this culture is used to. The result of this study has demonstrated that, in the private sector, employees leave their jobs if they are not satisfied. This result contradicts with Hofstede (2011) when he argued that in this culture (high UAI) employees seem to stay in their jobs even if they are unsatisfied. His conclusion concurs with the public sector, where employees do prefer to stay in their jobs, even if they are not satisfied. Staying in jobs when not satisfied creates challenges to the management. Unsatisfied employees will not be efficient and productive in the way they should be.

In cultures with high uncertainty avoidance, the boss tends to act as if he is the one who knows everything and has all the answers to all project-related issues. He is expected to be the one. This study has demonstrated that bosses in the ICT private sector do have

this attitude, in that they are expected to solve 80-90% of their problems. Some of them even consider it as a skill that managers should have. It could be argued that this attitude has a negative impact on the project overall. In the public sector, project managers are not in full control of their projects and therefore they are not expected to solve all project related issues. On top of that, they are not fully qualified managers.

### ***High Masculinity***

Masculinity (MAS), according to Hofstede (2010), refers to *'the distribution of emotional roles between the genders which is another fundamental issue for any society to which a range of solutions are found'*. According to Hofstede (2010), KSA's score was 60 (on a scale between 1 and 120). According to Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993) study, KSA score was 43, putting it in the feminine side. For the sake of this study, Hofstede's score was considered.

According to Hofstede (2011), cultures with high masculinity such as KSA are at one extreme in the 'emotional and social role differentiation between the genders'. In these cultures, work is given preference over family. The results of this study demonstrated that team members maintained friendly relationships within the team. Almost all project managers and project engineers and team leaders emphasized that relationships within the team and with the boss were friendly. This result tends to concur more with Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993), who found that Arab nations were closer to the 'feminine side' rather than with Hofstede's assessment.

### ***Low Indulgence***

Indulgence (IND), according to Hofstede (2010) *'stands for a society that allows relatively free gratification of basic and natural human drives related to enjoying life and having fun. Restraint stands for a society that suppresses gratification of needs and regulates it by means of strict social norms'*. According to Hofstede (2010), KSA's score was 52 (on a scale between 1 and 120). In low indulgence cultures, leisure has lower importance than high indulgence cultures (Hofstede, 2011). Fewer people are involved in sports activities. The assumption was made that employees work long hours. They would accept to work overtime when there is a need to. The result of the study

demonstrated that private and public sector employees accept working overtime when there is a need to. Arab team members usually accept working extra hours, while other nationalities would resist that, especially the Filipinos. The result demonstrated also that it is unlikely that project teams are asked to work long hours, while it is likely in the private sector. Working long hours introduces the risk of health and hazard problems.

### ***Low Long-Term Orientation***

Long Term Orientation (LTO) cultures, according to Hofstede (2010,) *'value virtues oriented toward future rewards, in particular perseverance and thrift. Short term orientation stands for the fostering of virtues related to the past and present, in particular respect for tradition, preservation of 'face' and fulfilling social obligations'*. According to Hofstede (2010), KSA's score was 36 (on a scale between 1 and 120). Obeidat et al. (2012) classified them as Long Term Orientation based on the fact that Arab nations believe in reducing Uncertainty by long term planning. Cultures with Long term orientation classification imply that future is more important than yesterday and today.

Employees in cultures with high LTO, adapt fast to the new circumstances at the work place. The results of the study indicated that private sector employees adapt fast to new circumstances, while employees in public sector resist adaptation to new circumstances. This implies that private sector can be tagged as high LTO and public sector as low LTO. This also implies that the private sector manager goes for long-term success, while the public sector manager goes for short-term success. Furthermore, in private sector projects milestones are treated as fixed, while they are treated as flexible in the public sector.

In the case of private sector projects in KSA the results concur with Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993), whose findings suggest that Saudis are not fatalistic when it comes to doing business, rather that they are 'future-oriented', realistic in their planning and always work towards preventing unfavourable results. However, this is not the case in the public sector projects studied.



### 7.3 HOW DOES NATIONAL CULTURE REACT WITH ORGANIZATIONAL CULTURE?

The previous sections in this chapter discussed the influence of the KSA's national culture (as represented by Hofstede's cultural dimensions) on the applicability of the project management principles (represented by the PMBoK model). The idea of considering the PMBoK as a form of codified organizational culture was introduced in *Chapter 4* of the literature review. The same chapter also introduced the argument that, whenever a conflict arises between the two cultures, national culture has been found to outweigh organizational culture. So how does national culture impact organizational culture in the case of ICT projects in KSA?

Based on arguments in *Chapter 4* arising from the literature, the PMI model (represented by the PMBoK guide) can be considered to be a 'codified Organizational Culture'. Arguably, National Culture in KSA can be expected to resist the introduction of the PMI Project Management practices, tools and techniques, to the KSA environment, based on the fact that this PMI model was designed originally for the Western world and in particular, the US culture. A culture like the US is described as *high IDV*, *low PDI* and *low UAI*, according to Hofstede (1981), which is quite contrary of the culture in the KSA.

This study has demonstrated clear examples of the clash between the KSA National Culture and the PMI Organizational Culture. Many of the results support the arguments of Alder (2007), Laurent (1990), Katz (2005) and Hofstede (1991); these writers all agree that National Culture will dominate Organizational Culture whenever there is a conflict between them. This concurs with Laurent (1990) when he stated that 'employees may be resisting a company's corporate culture if it is counter to the beliefs of their own national one'.

Table 7.1 compares the reaction of KSA National Culture (NC) with the PMI's Organizational Culture (OC), in the private and public sectors, as derived from the findings of this study.

No.	Theme	Reaction between National Culture (NC) & Organizational Culture (OC)	
		Private Sector	Public Sector
1.	Subordinates' respect for their superiors	OC outweighs NC	
2.	Subordinates' fear of their superiors		NC outweighs OC
3.	Task dominance over relationship	OC outweighs NC	OC outweighs NC
4.	Carefully following instructions after clarification	OC outweighs NC	OC outweighs NC
5.	Slow decision-making	NC outweighs OC	NC outweighs OC
6.	Protection in return for professionalism	OC outweighs NC	
7.	Protection in return for loyalty		NC outweighs OC
8.	Boss knows it all and has all the answers' attitude	NC outweighs OC	
9.	Boss doesn't have all the answers' attitude		OC outweighs NC
10.	Fixed milestones	OC outweighs NC	
11.	Flexible milestones		NC outweighs OC
12..	Pursuit of long-term success	OC outweighs NC	
13.	Pursuit of short-term success		NC outweighs OC
14.	Working long hours	NC outweighs OC	NC outweighs OC
15.	Maintaining friendly relationship	OC outweighs NC	OC outweighs NC
16.	Adaptation to circumstances	OC outweighs NC	
17.	Resistance to new circumstances		NC outweighs OC
18.	Leaving jobs when unsatisfied	OC outweighs NC	
19.	Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction		NC outweighs OC
	<b>Total instances of OC&gt;NC or NC&gt;OC</b>	9 OC>NC 3 NC>OC	4 OC>NC 8 NC>OC

Table 7.1: Summary of reaction of NC with OC for Private and Public Sectors

## 7.4 SUMMARY OF THE THEMES RESULTED FROM DATA ANALYSIS

As a result of the data analysis in *Chapter 6*, a number of themes have risen. For the purpose of comparison, the researcher has decided to combine the private and public sectors in one table: Table 7.2.

No.	Theme	Impact	PMBok (Dependent Variable)
1.	Subordinates' respect for their superiors (Private Sector)	positively	communication management
2.	Subordinates' fear of their superiors (Public Sector)	negatively	Communication and scope management

3.	Task dominance over relationship (Private and Public Sectors)	positively	quality management
4.	Carefully following instructions after clarification (Private and Public Sectors)	positively	time and cost management
5.	Slow decision-making (Private and Public Sectors)	negatively	Time, cost and procurement management
6.	Protection in return for professionalism (Private Sector)	positively	stakeholder management
7.	Protection in return for loyalty (Public Sector)	negatively	stakeholder management
8.	Boss knows it all and has all the answers' attitude (Private Sector)	negatively	integration management
9.	Boss doesn't have all the answers' attitude (Public Sector)	positively	integration management
10.	Fixed milestones (Private Sector)	positively	time management
11.	Flexible milestones (Public Sector)	negatively	time management
12.	Pursuit of long-term success (Private Sector)	positively	quality management
13.	Pursuit of short-term success (Public Sector)	negatively	quality management
14.	Working long hours (Private and Public Sectors)	negatively	risk management
15.	Maintaining friendly relationship (Private and Public Sectors)	positively	communication management
16.	Adaptation to circumstances (Private Sector)	positively	integration management
17.	Resistance to new circumstances (Public Sector)	negatively	integration management
18.	Leaving jobs when unsatisfied (Private Sector)	positively	human resources management
19.	Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction (Public Sector)	negatively	human resources management

Table 7.2: Summary of themes for private and public sectors

Table 7.2 will be used in refining the theoretical framework (developed in *Chapter 5*), which was based on Hofstede's cultural model and the PMBoK processes. The

framework will help the private and public sectors in better understanding the project management practices in the KSA context.

## **7.5 REFINING THE FRAMEWORK**

A preliminary framework, representing the private sector, was proposed in *Chapter 5*. Based on that framework, propositions and a questionnaire survey were designed and a study was conducted on a number of ICT professionals, in the private and public ICT sectors in KSA. The study results confirmed some propositions and suggested that other propositions should be modified. Figure 7.1 below shows the refined framework of the impact of national culture on project management processes in KSA.



### ***Explaining the framework***

As explained on page 51, above, certain relevant elements of Hofstede's cultural dimensions have been selected for the purpose of the current study.

The framework (as illustrated in *Figure 7.1*) is based on three main elements: Hofstede's cultural dimensions, PMI knowledge areas and themes that arose from the data analysis (which in turn came from responses to the 'propositions' that were proposed in *Chapter 5*). The framework is best described as '*conceptual*'; it does not go as far as a decision tool. It is rather a helping tool in the planning process for the human resourcing purposes of the ICT projects. The main purpose of the framework is to explain the impact of the cultural differences on the practices of project management in KSA.

The first element of the framework consists of the Hofstede's six cultural dimensions: Individualism (IDV); Power Distance (PDI); Uncertainty Avoidance (UAI); Masculinity (MAS); Indulgence (IND) and Long-Term Orientation (LTO). These dimensions are tagged as *high* and *low*, indicating the relative status of KSA national culture according to Hofstede's findings. The data analysis resulted in 19 themes (the second element of the framework) which were demonstrated to have influence on the practices of project management in both private and public sectors, in KSA. The knowledge areas of the PMBoK, which represent the third element in the framework, consist of: communication, scope, quality, time, procurement, cost, stakeholders, integration, risk and human resources management.

Even though the framework appears to be congested and complicated, it is easy to use. For example, a situation in a *high Power Distance* culture, where an ICT professional in the *private sector* who *respects his boss*, will result in a *positive influence* on the management of *project communication*. On the other hand, a situation involving an ICT professional in the *public sector* who *fears his boss*, will result a *negative influence* on the management of *project communication*. The blue rectangle represents the case when the theme (that arose from the data analysis) appears to show a similar effect in both private and public sectors.

This study provides practitioners with an individual basis for reflection and benefit. The framework can be used to evaluate the individuals who are supposed to join the project team. For example, a project manager with the attitude that he is the one and he has the answers for everything, a project manager who always looks for short-term success or maybe a team member who resists changes to new circumstances are all examples useful information of what this framework can provide us with, at the planning stage of the project. Different scores for individuals on PDI, IDV, UAI, MAS, LTO & IND is an indication of the individual's cultural background. This information obtained can be useful in deciding on the position the ICT professional can occupy in the project. For example, an individual with high MAS can fit better as a project coordinator, because he can establish and maintain friendly relationships with the others.

In the refined framework (*Figure 7.1*) additional arrows (suggesting and demonstrating relationships between elements of the framework) were added as a result of the findings in the data analysis. For example, the original propositions did not include the possible influence of cultural differences on the two PMBoK's knowledge areas: *scope* and *procurement management*. Analysis of the empirical research has demonstrated that these two knowledge areas could be impacted by cultural differences.

## **7.6 VALIDATION OF THE FRAMEWORK**

In order to give this study credibility, trustworthiness and to strengthen the researcher's standpoint, the interpretation outcome of the results obtained need to be validated. In this case validation is an absolute necessity to demonstrate that the revised framework is applicable in real life. Validation tests how useful this framework is, and how it serves what it was designed for. It also determines whether it answered the research questions introduced in *Chapter 1*. Validation also opens the door for improvements to the framework, by taking feedback from the subject matter experts.

### **7.6.1 Data Triangulation**

Triangulation is a valid approach used by many researchers in validating qualitative data by using a variety of sources of information. This approach was selected to

establish the validity of this study. The purpose of using such approach is to come to true and certain results. Webb et al. (1966) argued that:

*'Once a proposition has been confirmed by two or more independent measurement processes, the uncertainty of its interpretation is greatly reduced. The most persuasive evidence comes through a triangulation of measurement processes.'* (Webb et al. 1966, p. 3)

The aim here is not to prove consistencies across the data. In fact, inconsistencies should not be looked at as a weakness, but rather an opportunity to dig deeper into the data, as noted by Patton (2002).

According to Denzin (1970), there are four types of triangulation used by most researchers, and they are:

1. Data triangulation: collecting information through different strategies
2. Investigator triangulation: using more than one researcher to collect and study data
3. Theoretical triangulation: adopting more than one theoretical position in interpreting data
4. Methodological triangulation: adopting more than one method for collecting data

For the sake of this study, the first type (data triangulation) will be adopted as it is the most commonly used and easy-to-implement approach. Table 7.3, below, provides a summary of the triangulation for each of the 19 themes illustrated in Figure 7.1.

No	Theme	Data Triangulation
1.	Subordinates' respect for their superiors	Interview by team leader C2-PA: <i>'Subordinates are not always fearful ... It's more of respect than fear ... The subordinate respects his superior'</i>
		Interview with technical manager C6-PA: <i>'...I respect my boss but I don't fear him ... I</i>



		<i>can always go to my boss with no fear and tell him about the mistake I make'</i>
		Interview by managing director C3-PB: <i>'The employee here is evaluated by 4 different people ... so there is no fear'</i>
		Observation while being at their office: very friendly relationships with no signs of fear of the boss. Open and direct communication
2.	Subordinates' fear of their superiors	Interview with project engineer C2-PD: <i>'The fear of the superior is usually seen at the non-Saudi side of the subordinates'</i>
		Informal discussion with team leader C1-PD: <i>'...there is a fear from the functional manager because he controls the annual evaluation ...'</i>
		Informal discussion with project engineer C2-PD: <i>'...subordinates fear their superiors in the government sector projects by 90% ...'</i>
		Interview with PMO director C3-PD: <i>'...managers and higher managerial positions are looked at with fear ...'</i>
3.	Task dominance over relationship	Interview with project manager C1-PA: <i>'... The reality is that work is more important ...'</i>
		Interview with technical manager C6-PA: <i>'At the end of the day work is our target, and this target can be best achieved by having good relationships'</i>
		Interview with project engineer C2-PD: <i>'Relationship is important but it's not more</i>

		<i>important than the task'</i>
		Informal discussion with C1-PC: ' <i>...to me, work is much more important than having good relationships with the members of the team...</i> '
4.	Carefully following instructions after clarification	Interview with project manager C1-PA: ' <i>Discussing the task with your boss can make the execution easier instead of taking instructions without thinking</i> '
		Interview with team leader C2-PA: ' <i>It [following instructions blindly] does not always happen.</i>
		Interview with project engineer C3-PA: ' <i>When I get instructions from my higher management to do something I always review and discuss these instructions</i> ' (C3-PA)
		Interview with technical manager C6-PA: ' <i>The team needs to understand before they execute any task ...</i> '
		Interview with managing director C3-PB: ' <i>The team members go down to the smallest detail possible and sometimes clashes happen because of that between the PM and his team</i> '
		Interview with PMO director C4-PD: ' <i>It's recommended to open discussions on new tasks and when you need opinions on</i> '
5.	Slow decision-making	Interview with project engineer C3-PA: ' <i>Decisions are needed to be considered and taken carefully even if they take time and</i>

		<i>seem to be slow.’ (C3-PA)</i>
		Interview by project engineer C4-PA: <i>‘That’s why whatever he [project manager] wants to take decisions on takes long time due to his technical weakness ...’</i>
		Interview with project engineer C5-PA: <i>‘I need to take my time to decide on the project related issues and I don’t see this as a problem’</i>
		Informal discussion with project manager C1-PB: <i>‘...decisions are made slowly because of the bureaucracy ...’</i>
		Interview with team leader C1-PD: <i>‘In general slow decisions (made at top level management) affect the project’</i>
		Interview with project manager C2-PD: <i>‘Usually decisions from the government entities (customer) and from the contractor (private in some cases) are made slowly’</i>
		Documentation (memo) presented by C2-PD showing the date a request was made and the date decision was made. He did not allow me to have a copy.
6.	Protection in return for professionalism	Interview with team leader C2-PA: <i>‘In my team I do not protect anybody just for being loyal to me ... loyalty and showing respect are additions to the professionalism that can give him preference over the others’</i>
		Interview with project engineer C3-PA: <i>I’m against this [loyalty to the boss]... loyalty should be to the work and to the</i>

		<i>corporation, not to the manager'</i>
		Interview with technical manager C6-PA: <i>'The member's work, experience and knowledge are far more important than loyalty'</i>
		Interview with project manager C1-PB: <i>'Personally I would favour and/or protect a professional team member for being loyal to the company, not to me personally ... we follow ethics and rules'</i>
7.	Protection in return for loyalty	Interview with team leader C1-PD: <i>'It happens quite often in the public sector projects that a certain manager protects or favours a certain team member as long as that does not impact the manager's relationship with the higher management.'</i>
		Interview with project manager C3-PD: <i>'Favouring and protecting groups from the team is seen in the government sector more than the private sector, and in some cases it's based on tribal or family connections'</i>
		Interview with PMO director C4-PD: <i>'We see it [favouring and protecting individuals in return for loyalty]in the public sector more because the "accountability system" in the public sector is not that strong ... we have noticed that the loyalty to the boss is more important than qualifications here ...'</i>
		Informal discussion over coffee (was not recorded) with C4-PD: <i>'For your back to be protected you need to belong to someone</i>

		<i>powerful'</i>
8.	Boss knows it all and has all the answers' attitude	Interview with project manager C1-PA: <i>'This attitude [knowing it all] is part of the self-confidence, and self-confidence is important and managers need to have it ... 'I believe that it's good for the boss to show that he knows it all even if he does not'</i>
		Interview with project engineer C3-PA: <i>'That's why he [project manager] is there ... he should be competent and capable of solving technical and management issues'</i>
		Interview by technical manager C6-PA: <i>I would say 85-90% of the project-related issues can be solved by the PM'</i>
		Informal discussion with PMO director C2-PB: <i>'I sometimes follow this strategy [the one man show] because I know where I'm going'</i>
		Interview with PMO manager C2-PC: <i>'As a PM you should be capable of solving 98% of the project related issues that you face ... '</i>
9.	Boss doesn't have all the answers' attitude	Interview with team leader C1-PD: <i>'No one has the ability to solve all the problems in the project no matter what his position is'</i>
		Interview with project engineer C2-PD: <i>'Decisions in most cases are made without thorough considerations of the case and that's why the boss is not capable of solving all the problems.'</i> (C2-PD)
		Informal discussion with PMO director C4-PD: <i>'The PM has no control over his project</i>

		<i>because the functional manager controls resources ... this does not help the PM to have answers to everything in the project'</i>
10.	Fixed milestones	Interview with project manager C1-PA: <i>'Milestone can't be changed because there is always a penalty involved ... milestones mean dates that have to be met with no flexibility'</i>
		Interview with team leader C2-PA: <i>'To me milestone is important and I treat it this way ...'</i>
		Interview by PMO director C2-PB: <i>'we always do our best to stay on track when it comes to milestones'</i>
		Interview by managing director C3-PB: <i>'If you ask me about the buyer's (customer) side I'll say "yes" milestones are treated as if they are flexible ...but not from the seller's side like our company'</i>
		Documentation (Gantt chart) was presented by project manager C1-PA. Did not allow photocopying
		Interview with project manager C1-PC: <i>No, milestones are not treated as if they are flexible ... not in this company'</i>
11.	Flexible milestones	Interview with team leader C1-PD: <i>'Milestones are flexible in the government projects. (Money) means nothing to them and (time) is not counted'</i>
		Interview with project manager C3-PD: <i>Usually in the government RFP the time</i>

		<i>limit is open or made longer than normal...</i>
		Interview with PMO director C4-PD: <i>'Based on my experience in the government projects, the PM treats milestones as if they are flexible...'</i>
		Documentation (Gantt chart) was presented by project manager C3-PD. Did not allow photocopying
12.	Pursuit of long-term success	Interview with project manager C1-PA: <i>'I usually go for long term success ... i.e. when I'm done with the project deliverables 100%.</i>
		Interview with team leader C2-PA: <i>'This will be on the expense of the quality of the product, and that's why we prefer long term success'</i>
		Interview with project engineer C3-PA: <i>'If the aim is a short term success the product will come back to haunt the service provider later on'</i>
		Interview with project engineer C4-PA: <i>'I would not go for short-term success'</i>
		Interview with project manager C1-PB: <i>'In the IT world where the product is an application or programme, you can't aim for short term success ... it just does not work'</i>
13.	Pursuit of short-term success	Informal discussion by team leader C1-PD: <i>'Government projects are based on short-term success...'</i>
		Interview with team leader C1-PD: <i>The PM would look for short term success in return for immediate credit, leaving the unfinished</i>

		<i>part of the project to the maintenance phase'</i>
		Interview with project manager C3-PD: <i>'Short term success is what they do in this organization, and quality is never a concern, as per the project manager'</i>
		Interview with PMO director C4-PD: <i>'... so, yes, they would go for short term success on the expense of the quality'</i>
14.	Working long hours	Interview with project manager C1-PA: <i>'However if there is a real need for the extra work, in this case yes, they are willing to work extra hours ... but not all the team members would accept to do extra hours'</i>
		Interview with project engineer C5-PA: <i>Arabs, for example, don't mind working extra hours, while other nationalities like Filipinos and Pakistanis do'</i>
		Interview with technical manager C6-PA: <i>'For us (Arabs) we put extra hour everyday with no pay and we feel ok about that, but they don't, especially the Filipinos'</i>
		Interview with PMO director C2-PB: <i>'For example Arab nationals like Jordanians, Lebanese, Syrians and Egyptians don't mind working extra hours, even if they are unpaid'</i>
		Interview with team leader C1-PD: <i>'In our case most of our team members are Saudis and other Arab nationals ... they usually accept to work extra time if needed'</i>



15.	Maintaining friendly relationship	Interview with project engineer C3-PA: <i>'I always make sure and assume that my team enjoy friendly relationships'</i>
		Interview with technical manager C6-PA: <i>'In general, the team members who have good relationships and can work together are usually selected'</i>
		Observation while at the office: friendly relationship between C2-PB and two project team members (analyst and developer)
		Informal discussion with C1-PD: <i>'Relationships are mostly friendly within the team and with the project manager'</i>
16.	Adaptation to circumstances	Interview with project manager C1-PA: <i>'My team usually adapts to new circumstances such as working in a far or unplanned location'</i>
		Interview with project engineer C3-PA: <i>'... but the majority of my team would accept these changes of circumstances ...'</i>
		Interview with project engineer C4-PA: <i>'The project team would accept new circumstances because they have trust in their boss'</i>
		Interview with PMO director C2-PB: <i>'You need to explain or give them a brief on the benefits they will get from this change of circumstances'</i>
17.	Resistance to new circumstances	Interview with team leader C1-PD: <i>'Saudi nationals wouldn't prefer to change and to adapt to new circumstances, unless there is</i>

		<i>a clear and direct benefit from this change'</i>
		Interview with project manager C3-PD: <i>'... they would like to do what they're used to doing and they would not accept changes in circumstances easily'</i>
		Informal discussions with PMO director C4-PD: <i>'Changes of circumstances are not welcomed in government projects ...'</i>
18.	Leaving jobs when unsatisfied	Interview with project engineer C3-PA: <i>'The moment they accepted to be part of this project I assumed they are satisfied with their jobs'</i>
		Interview with technical manager C6-PA: <i>'Arab team members would leave if they don't like the job, and go and look for other opportunities'</i>
		Interview with managing director C3-PB: <i>'In the IT sector, unsatisfied employees leave their jobs and look for better opportunities'</i>
		Interview with project manager C1-PC: <i>'They would leave the job if they don't like it'</i>
19.	Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction	Interview with project manager C1-PB: <i>'In the government sector, the unsatisfied individual will stay even if he does not like his job because there is no loyalty to the organization and because of the low productivity (as he mentioned earlier, with an exception of the government entities where the maturity is high)'</i>
		Interview with team leader C1-PD: <i>'For this reason non-Saudi employees stay in jobs</i>

		<i>even if they are unsatisfied'</i>
		Interview with project manager C3-PD: <i>'Most people do that, including his team'</i>

Table 7.3: Summary of the triangulation for each of the 19 themes

### 7.6.2 Validation of the Framework by an External Panel

As a means of validating the Framework that emerged from this study, four individual ICT professionals (each with more than 10 years of experience in ICT projects) were contacted to review the framework and discuss its applicability in the ICT sector in KSA. The four individuals (all different from those interviewed during the data collection process) agreed to meet with the researcher at the researcher's workplace and discuss the validity of the framework.

The purpose of the validation exercise is to check the applicability of the framework in real life through meetings with subject matter experts. Three questions were designed to serve this purpose:

1. *Do you think the framework contributes to a more successful delivery of ICT projects in KSA?*
2. *Do you see any issues in implementing the framework in ICT industry?*
3. *What improvements to the framework would you like to see?*

The meeting started with an introduction by the researcher to the aim and objectives of the research, how results obtained and finally the build-up of the framework. When asked if the framework contributes to the successful delivery of the ICT projects in KSA, one respondent in the validation panel (VP1) stated that:

*'I have always questioned the benefit of these frameworks for practitioners ... I've always believed that most of them, if not all, are theoretical and not easy to apply in real life'. (VP1)*

He added that:

*'Let's assume the framework can help in delivering successful projects, the real challenge is to get the management especially in the government sector to adopt it and apply it in their projects ... It may be easier to convince the private sector organizations to do that, but not the government'. (VP1)*

Another respondent (VP2) commented on the idea of benefiting from the theoretical frameworks. He suggested that:

*'I believe the framework is suitable and could serve the purpose, but it seems a bit complicated ... I guess it is not easy to have a framework for both private and public sector projects in one diagram'. (VP2)*

The second respondent (VP2) elaborated by saying that:

*'I believe that choosing the right individuals for the project is very important ... this framework definitely contributes in the delivery of successful projects ... what I need as a project manager is a team that can work together, and one of the factors that can affect the harmony of the team is "cultural differences"'. (VP2)*

The third respondent (VP3) agreed with the second respondent when he commented that:

*'I think the implementation of the project management processes is impacted by national cultural differences, as demonstrated by your study, is a step forward towards a successful delivery of projects ... I believe the framework could be a useful tool in achieving that' (VP3)*

The third respondent showed his support to the idea of adopting the framework to minimize the impact of national culture on the practice of project management in KSA, when he stated that:

*'I like the idea of using the framework at the individuals' level ... my expectation that this framework if implemented well could improve the delivery of ICT projects in a multi-cultural environment like KSA ... I have doubts that nations who have work force coming from different backgrounds would relate the delay of projects*

*or even failure, in some cases, to cultural differences within the project team ... as you know, KSA has more than one third of its population (approximately 7 million) coming from outside the kingdom'. (VP3)*

The fourth respondent (VP4) agreed with the second respondent (VP2) when he suggested that:

*'The framework could be applied easily in the private sector projects, but not in the public sector, due to the bureaucracy in the government business ... I worked in both private and public sector projects, and I believe adopting it will need a decision from higher management ... everybody knows that project managers in the government projects in KSA have lesser control over their projects than in the private sector ... this makes it hard to adopt such frameworks, even though I personally believe, and based on my experience, that if a decision was taken to adopt this framework, it could contribute to the successful delivery of the ICT projects'. (VP4)*

When asked if they expect any issues in implementing the framework in ICT industry, the second respondent (VP2) pointed out that:

*'I think the framework can be used during the planning phase of the project to help in the selection of the team members, but not all team members ... perhaps only key people in the team like project managers, team leaders, project engineers and software developers ... I don't think it's practical to spend much time applying this framework on the low-level team members like technicians.' (VP2)*

When asked if they would like to see any improvements to the framework, the first respondent (VP1) suggested that:

*'Even though I have no faith in these frameworks I can still give a chance to any suggested solution that can prevent projects from being delayed or failed ... I would suggest that this framework be put under test for longer period and on different ICT projects in both sectors in KSA'. (VP1)*

The third respondent (VP3) raised the question of the cost of implementation when he argued that:

*‘One of the issues that need to be taken into consideration is the cost of implementing this framework ...this will probably add extra cost on the budget of the project ... so it’s up to the management if they want to spend more time and money on implementing the framework during the planning phase’. (VP3)*

One of the respondents (VP2) made a valid point when he commented that:

*‘One more important issue to consider is the mechanism of implementing the framework ... so how do you implement it? ... I would imagine that it should be part of the PMO procedures in any organization’. (VP2)*

The fourth respondent (VP4) criticized the fact that some of the interviewees in the study were not Saudis when he stated that:

*‘The study is about the Saudi national culture and how it impacts the implementation of the project management procedure in KSA ... but I see that not all the participants in the study are Saudis ... I believe this makes the results including the proposed framework questionable’. (VP4)*

### **Summary: Validation of the Framework by an External Expert Panel**

The validation of the framework by an external panel was seen as a necessary requirement in order to avoid the criticism that the whole process was biased. Another reason for independent validation is to give the potential users in the future a chance to understand the framework’s pros and cons and future possible enhancements. As was expected the framework was accepted by some and criticized by others in the validation review panel. Enhancements to the framework were suggested by the review panel making this process a healthy and useful exercise. The general feedback after the review was concluded was that the framework could be a useful tool during the planning stage of the project, and what makes it effective is the proper adoption of such tools by the higher management, especially in the government projects.

# CHAPTER EIGHT: CONCLUSIONS

## 8.1 INTRODUCTION

This chapter provides answers to the research questions presented in *Chapter 1*. It also revisits the research objectives and checks whether these objectives were met. The chapter also highlights the contribution this research has made to knowledge (both theoretical and practical), acknowledges the limitations of the study, and finally provides recommendations for future work.

## 8.2 THE RESEARCH AIMS AND OBJECTIVES REVISITED

The aim of this research is to contribute to the more successful delivery of ICT projects in the Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA). There is a commonly-held belief that there are elements of national culture in KSA that impact the implementation of PM processes on ICT projects.

Seven objectives have been designed to support the aim, to test the propositions, to answer the research questions, and to drive this research study. These are to:

1. Consider available systems of PM procedures and select one that best reflects international best practice;
2. Examine available models of cultural dimensions and select the most appropriate for the study;
3. Define KSA national cultural factors using the selected model of cultural dimensions;
4. Propose a theoretical framework that demonstrates the impact of these cultural factors on PM procedures;
5. Test this with data gathered from private and public ICT projects in KSA;
6. Review the findings and their implications for the framework;
7. Advise on how international PM best practice systems might be adapted to be more applicable in the KSA context.

The next section provides a summary of the achievement of the research objectives.

The literature in *Chapter 2* discussed the history, tradition, culture, religion and political system in KSA. The KSA economy including the development plans, the ICT market and industry and its role in the Saudi economy were examined in detail. *Chapter 2* also reflected upon ICT projects in KSA in terms of size and benefits they bring to the KSA economy. *Chapter 3* examined what 'culture' is and the difference between organizational culture and national culture. It also discussed the impact of national culture on international management. A comparison between different cultural dimensional models was drawn, with an emphasis on Hofstede's model. Arab culture, based on Hofstede's model, was discussed. Islam as a religion influences the daily life activities of Arab Nations including Saudis. Islamic teachings and Arab traditions form the basis of most of the behaviours of Arab Nations. Examples include: the belief that destiny is in God's hands; the security of belonging in groups; and the need to establish and maintain close relationships. All these were discussed in the literature review in *Chapter 3*.

The recognition of the high level of inequality of power in the Saudi society is a clear indication of the social gap between superiors and subordinates. The behaviour of managers distinguishing themselves from their subordinates is common in the government entities, and it is accepted by the Saudi society. Saudi managers make decision autocratically and therefore joint decision making, for them, is not a preferred strategy. Being a member of a certain group or family can influence the result for an individual in an organization.

*Chapter 4* reviewed literature on project management. It went through project management standards in details. It concentrated on the PMI model as an adopted model for this study. It also introduced literature that has related national culture and project management, which has shown that *where* project managers operate plays an important part in developing their behaviour.

Consideration of the literature reveals the fact that PMBOK (2004) has not paid enough attention to culture. Perhaps the reason was that this project management reference work was written by a group of writers who thought that culture was not an issue. Consequently, it is argued that there is a gap in knowledge that needed to be filled, as



culture needs to be taken seriously in the study of project management. The PMBoK guide is clearly better suited to cultures like the USA that, following Hofstede, would be described as individualistic. This had already been noted by Bredillet and his colleagues (2010) who argue that project management is best suited to cultures with (in Hofstede's language) *small Power Distance*, weak *Uncertainty Avoidance* and high *Individualism*. They also argued that *Masculinity* dimension has no impact on project management.

Many researchers like Hofstede (1981), Zaharna (1995), Skitmore (2004), Zwikaël et al. (2005), Sonja et al. (2007) and Rees & Pinnington (2013) have recognized the impact of national culture on project management. The literature introduced the argument that different project managers, with different cultural background should be prepared to run similar projects in different ways. Cultures, like KSA, with a collectivist background, would not appreciate project management standards originating from cultures with an individualist background. Therefore, extra care must be taken when trying to implement the PMBoK standards in collectivist cultures.

This study will benefit most project managers and other professionals who have individualist cultural background and are managing ICT projects in a collectivist cultures like, KSA. Literature showed clearly that IDV has an impact on project management. Based on Hofstede (1983), PDI and UAI are also related to project management. PDI and UAI help explaining how power is distributed and how outcomes are made predictable in the projects. PDI is one of the most powerful cultural dimension used (Dickson et al. 2003) that impacts project management. LTO was linked to the time factor in a very limited number of studies. No evidence in the literature that IND is related to project management.

This study was based on the literature in *Chapters 2, 3 and 4*. Table 8.1 below summarizes the cultural factors (based on Hofstede's cultural model) that this study has found, to influence the proper implementation of PMBoK in ICT projects in KSA:

No.	Cultural Factor	Cultural Dimension
1.	<i>Subordinates-superiors' relations</i>	PDI
2.	<i>Relationship and tasks</i>	IDV, PDI
3.	<i>Following instructions</i>	PDI
4.	<i>Decision-making</i>	PDI
5.	<i>Protection and loyalty</i>	IDV, PDI
6.	<i>Boss and attitude</i>	UAI
7.	<i>Milestones</i>	LTO
8.	<i>Pursuit of success</i>	LTO
9.	<i>Working hours</i>	IND
10.	<i>Relationships within team</i>	PDI, MAS
11.	<i>New circumstances</i>	LTO
12.	<i>Jobs and satisfaction</i>	UAI

Table 8.1: Summary of cultural factors influencing PMBoK processes

The findings in this study have confirmed that the PDI, IDV and UAI have significant impact on project management in KSA. The study also demonstrated that LTO, MAS and IND have lesser impact.

Based on the research findings, a theoretical framework was developed to help the ICT professionals in understanding the impact of the national culture on the implementation of the PMBoK knowledge areas in the ICT projects in KSA.

The framework (shown above in Figure 7.1) consists of 19 themes (resulted from the data analysis), 6 cultural dimensions (based on Hofstede's cultural model) and 10 PMBoK project management knowledge areas (based on PMI model). The framework works for both private and public sectors in the ICT industry in KSA. The framework is proposed as a very useful tool for the ICT project managers with a high IDV, low PDI, low UAI and high LTO cultural background.

A major difference between private and public sectors is that in the private sector subordinates *respect* their superiors, while in the public sector subordinates *fear* their

superiors. Showing respect to the boss positively impact communication between the subordinates and superiors. On the other hand, fearing the boss negatively impacts communication.

Results for, both private and public sectors, indicated that task dominates relationship, instructions are usually followed after careful discussions with the supervisors, and decisions are made slowly.

Another major difference between the two sectors is that in the private sector team members are protected in return for their professionalism, while the team members are protected in the public sector in return for loyalty. Another difference is that the boss acts as if he is the one in the project in the private sector, while the opposite happens in the public sector.

One important difference was found in the attitude towards milestones. The private sector treats milestones as if they are fixed, while public sector treats milestones as flexible, and this negatively impacted time. Project managers in the private sector pursue long-term success, while public sector managers pursue short-term success. Another difference is that project teams in the private sector adapt to new circumstances, while they resist new circumstances in the public sector. One final difference is that team members, in the private sector, leave their jobs when unsatisfied, while, in the public sector, they stay at their jobs despite dissatisfaction.

### **8.3 THE RESEARCH QUESTIONS REVISITED**

Based on the above research aim and objectives, three main research questions were developed:

**Question #1:** What, if any, are the elements of KSA national culture that impact the implementation of the PM processes on ICT projects (from the vender's perspective)?

**Question #2:** How and to what extent do they have their impact?

The literature in *Chapters 2, 3 and 4* demonstrated that national culture does indeed have an impact on project management. This is clearly supported by many researchers, such as Hofstede (1981), Zaharna (1995), Skitmore (2004), Zwikael et al., (2005), Sonja et al. (2007) and Rees & Pinnington (2013).

A number of cultural factors, summarized in Table 8.1, were tested on 15 ICT professionals working on 4 different projects, in both private and public sectors, to try to determine the real impact of national culture on the applicability of project management processes in KSA. The results of the study have demonstrated that:

1. Subordinates' respect of their superiors in the private sector projects results in open and direct communication
2. Subordinates' fear of their superiors in the public sector projects results in indirect and difficult communication
3. The dominance of task over relationship in both private and public sector projects results in a product with quality
4. The careful following of instructions after clarification in both private and public sector projects results in less time wasted and less extra cost
5. Slow decision-making in both private and public sector projects results in project delays and extra cost
6. Protection in return for professionalism in the private sector projects results in an easier relationship with project team
7. Protection in return for loyalty in the public sector projects results in a more difficult relationship with project team
8. The 'one-man show' attitude by the boss in the private sector projects jeopardises the chances of a successful project
9. The 'shared decision-making' attitude by the boss in the public sector projects increases the chances of a successful project
10. Treating milestones as if they are fixed in the private sector projects saves time
11. Treating milestones as if they are flexible in the public sector projects can result in time loss
12. Pursuing long-term success in the private sector projects results in a product with quality

13. Pursuing short-term success in the public sector projects results in a product with less quality
14. Working long hours in both private and public sector projects may introduce hazard and health at risks
15. Maintaining friendly relationships within the team in both private and public sector projects results in easily-manageable communication
16. Adaptation to new circumstances in the private sector projects increases the chances of a successful project
17. Resistance to new circumstances in the public sector projects decreases the chances of a successful project
18. Leaving jobs when unsatisfied in the private sector projects makes the management of human resources easier
19. Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction in the public sector projects makes the management of human resources more difficult

**Question #3:** What needs to be done in adapting standard PM approaches to cater for this?

### ***The Importance of Adapting a Standard PM Approach***

The interest in Project Management has increased over time. PM standards were initiated in the USA and more recently have become popular throughout the world. Statistics have shown a significant increase in the number of certified project management professionals (PMP), according to the PMI (2015). This increase in the popularity of the PMI standards and techniques is an indication of the benefits gained in applying such standards in projects. However, as explained earlier, when PM standards (such as those of the PMI) are 'exported' other factors need to be taken into account. One of these factors is national culture.

Different approaches to Project Management can be linked to differences in national cultures (Hofstede, 1983). Hofstede (1983) concludes that PM may fit better in the USA culture than elsewhere. This study has demonstrated that national culture can impact

project management practices in KSA and may play a role in the success or failure of ICT projects in private and public sector projects. For example, Bjerke and Al-Meer (1993), in testing the applicability of U.S. managerial theories in the Saudi context, found that Arab managers show constant support and commitment towards their organizations. But according to the findings of the present study only private sector projects concur with their results.

Hofstede (1980) has raised the question of whether management theories (an example being the PMBoK) can be suitable for other nations who represent different ways of thinking from the nation where these theories originated (e.g. the USA). The overall question is whether a culture-free management theory can be applied globally (Hofstede, 1993). Obeidat, et al. (2012) argue that because Arab culture is different from Western culture that different management theories are needed for Arab organizations. Bredillet and his colleagues (2010, p. 183) demonstrated that project management is deployed:

1. in small power distance countries better than in large power distance countries
2. independently of the masculinity/femininity dimension
3. in weak uncertainty avoidance countries better than in strong uncertainty avoidance countries
4. in individualist countries better than in collectivist countries

### ***Recommendations for Minimizing the Impact of National Culture on PM***

Any project would stand a better chance of being delivered successfully if it is managed well and according to agreed standards and techniques. So to deliver a successful project in a diverse cultural environment, steps are needed to minimise the impact of culture on the practice of these project management techniques. The recommendation on how we can minimize the impact of culture on the applicability of Project Management standards (e.g. the PMBoK) is by strengthening *cultural awareness, professional training, and proper planning*.

ICT professionals and Project Managers in particular, with cultural backgrounds that are different from the culture in KSA, need to be aware of the cultural values, beliefs and perceptions of this country. These professionals cannot assume that project management approaches, like the PMI model, can be applied anywhere in the world, just because it worked in cultures similar to those where it originated (i.e. the USA). It is recommended that these professionals, including project management professional bodies, like the PMI, think outside their traditional ways. What is recommended in this situation is an acceptable level of cultural awareness to help in understanding how others behave, think and act. With this level of cultural awareness, project management applicability can be improved and may lead to better results.

For efficient multi-cultural project management, the researcher recommends Elena's (2010, p. 658) four stage framework; *'learn the definition and different types of culture, understand the cultural differences, respect the cultural differences, and enjoy the richness of multi-cultural team'*. This framework can be adopted as part of the cultural awareness and professional training of ICT professionals in KSA.

Project management has proved to be efficient in increasing the chances of delivering successful projects over the years, according to the Standish Group (2012) which also stated that professional training played a role in increasing project success. National culture, which currently has little or no presence in PMI standards, tools and techniques is indeed a major element in project management success.

Based on the outcome of the present study, it is recommended that key ICT professionals are trained on how to deal with cultural differences in order to minimize their impacts on projects. Part of the reasons for the increase in success rate, in projects, between 2004 and 2012, was the *'increase in project management as a profession and the trained project management professionals'* (Standish Group, 2012, p.1). This project management training may be enhanced to include special training elements on *cultural awareness* which most likely increases the rate of success. 'Stress management training' has been recognized and developed as an important tool, to help in overcoming the cultural issue (Harvey, 1997). This kind of training could be useful in

overcoming some of the issues resulted from the cultural differences within the team, especially in project communication.

The aim of the present study is to deliver successful ICT projects in KSA. That explains the importance of the framework developed in *Chapter 5*, which leads us to the other important recommendation on how to minimize the impact of national culture on PM: *strategic planning*. The developed framework is an important planning cultural-based tool on how to select a project team individual during the planning phase of the project. Selecting the right individual based on his/her cultural background may increase the chance of a successful project. *Poor planning* is one of the reasons for project failure and delays (Taimour, 2005 and Slevin, 1987).

Project managers with an individualist background, and working in a collectivist environment, need to invest in their project-team building (Hofstede, 1983). Assembling the right team for the project can contribute in the successful delivery of the project. This concurs with Elena (2010) and Knutson (2011) that putting together an efficient team, by the project manager, is crucial and can play part in the success of the project.

Finally, and since the PMBoK guide does not include enough material on cultures and how to deal with their differences, the present study recommends that, for such popular PM standards, drafting committees need to study and suggest different versions of cultural models that proved to be applicable in important cultures, like Arab and Chinese.

#### **8.4 CONTRIBUTION TO KNOWLEDGE**

The Kingdom of Saudi Arabia (KSA) shares many values and norms with other Arab and Islamic countries, but it is still considered a unique country, as it is the custodian of the K'aba and the two holy mosques. Its culture is strongly connected to the Islamic teachings and its traditions. KSA also is an important regional power that has influence on economy and politics in the Middle East, and beyond. For these reasons it was thought important to investigate the impact of national culture on the applicability of project management in the ICT industry.



The first contribution to knowledge was the development of a theoretical framework, which provides the basics in understanding the culture of KSA and its impact on the applicability of the PMBoK on ICT projects, for both private and public sectors. This framework is a very useful tool and would be best used during the planning of the project to help in selecting the right team for the project.

Another contribution to knowledge concerns the PMBoK guide. As mentioned in the literature, the PMI have not properly considered national culture an important issue in the success or failure of projects. National culture is mentioned only briefly in the PMBoK. This study has opened the door for more studies on the impact of national culture on project management in different industries.

Hofstede's centre offers a report that can be generated based on a questionnaire, to help practitioners in understanding other cultures. The questionnaire provides cultural awareness and increases effectiveness in dealing with other cultures. The generated report provides what cultural differences can be expected and provides scores based on Hofstede's cultural dimensions. The issue here is that Hofstede's generated reports are useful for generic observations rather than for individuals in the project team. This study provides practitioners with an individual basis for reflection and benefit. The framework can be used to evaluate the individuals who are supposed to join the project team. For example, a project manager with the attitude that he is the one and he has the answers for everything, a project manager who always looks for short-term success or maybe a team member who resists changes to new circumstances are all examples useful information of what this framework can provide us with, at the planning stage of the project. Different scores for individuals on PDI, IDV, UAI, MAS, LTO & IND is an indication of the individual's cultural background. This information obtained can be useful in deciding on the position the ICT professional can occupy in the project. For example, an individual with high MAS can fit better as a project coordinator, because he can establish and maintain friendly relationships with the others.

This framework can be useful in creating a measuring tool for the individual before being selected to join a project, especially in KSA where the work force of any project consists of many nationalities with many cultural backgrounds.

## **8.5 LIMITATIONS OF THIS RESEARCH**

Doing research on organizations, and in particular the government organizations, in KSA was never easy. People in KSA are still not open to discussion, particularly when it involves religion and traditions. One of the limitations of this study is the difficulty in obtaining access to the government entities and conducting a research. This research included 4 different projects, 3 of them are private sector projects and only one public sector project. The researcher's intention was to get another public sector project, but his request was turned down by at least 3 public sector entities. Even with the single public sector entity that agreed to have interviews, there was reluctance in providing details (such as documentation) to support the arguments.

Another limitation of this study was the continuous interruptions during the interviews by the bosses of the interviewees. This happened in both private and public sector interviews. That interruption caused the interviewees to lose concentration and to be tense in case they were being listened to or watched by their bosses. Of course, this behaviour was understandable; no one wants to lose his job.

## **8.6 RECOMMENDATIONS FOR FUTURE WORK**

Due to the difficulty in gaining access to more public entities than the researcher had access to, it is recommended that further studies to be conducted in the future on more public entities to confirm the findings of this research. This is probably best achieved by conducting a research by an insider. Someone who works in a ministry, for example, and has access to many organizations under this ministry, can be a good candidate. Having an outsider, like the researcher of this study, trying to gain access to public organizations may work sometimes, but most of the time doesn't. Patience and persistence are the two keys to achieving such a difficult task.

This research can be expanded to include neighbouring countries like Kuwait, UAE, Qatar, Oman and Bahrain. These countries share many values and some cultural background with KSA, such as tradition, language and religion. It would be interesting to find out if ICT professionals in these countries share the same behaviours in their projects like the KSA professionals.

# APPENDICES

## APPENDIX 1: INTRODUCTION TO THE QUESTIONNAIRE

Dear Participant

You are invited to participate in this study due to your experience in project management. The study is part of a Ph.D. research programme at Northumbria University, Newcastle, UK. The title of the study is:

***Influence of National Culture on Project Management: A Study of Information and Communication Technology Projects in Saudi Arabia.***

The aim of this research is to develop a culturally-orientated model for project management that will lead to a better understanding, appreciation and proper implementation of project management tools and techniques, such as those based on the Project Management Body of Knowledge (PMBok).

Please be assured that the information and data you provide will be kept confidential, and will not be used for any other purpose other than this study. I would be more than happy to offer you a copy of the study results and recommendations, upon request.

Your contribution to this research is highly appreciated. Please allow for a twenty-minutes interview, at your respected organization, to chat and to help you complete the attached questionnaire.

Please feel free to contact me at the email address and/or cell phone, below:

Romil Salah

E-mail: romil.salah@northumbria.ac.uk

Cell Phone: 0500014683

## APPENDIX 2: THE QUESTIONNAIRE DESIGN

To what extent do you agree or disagree with the following statements?

***SP1: 'Subordinates are fearful of their superiors'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP2: 'Relationships between project manager and members of project team is more important than the task itself'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP3: 'Instructions by supervisors are followed without questions'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP4: 'Decisions are made very slowly'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**SP5: 'Certain project team members or groups are protected or favoured, by their bosses, in return for loyalty'**

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**SP6: 'The boss is capable of solving all the problems faced by his team members'**

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**SP7: 'milestones are treated as if they are flexible'**

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**SP8: 'Project managers prefer short-term success'**

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**SP9: 'Project team members are prepared to working extra hours'**

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**SP10: 'Friendly relationships are maintained between workers'**

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**SP11: 'Workers adapt fast to new circumstances'**

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**SP12: 'Project team members prefer to stay in jobs even when they are not satisfied'**

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP13: 'Communication between different levels of management are very open and direct'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP14: 'Quality of work produced suffers when relationships become more important than the work itself'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP15: 'Following instructions, by project team, without questions asked, saves time and money'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP16: 'Slow decision-making process introduces unnecessary delays and overhead cost'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP17: 'Protecting certain groups of workers, by their bosses, makes relationships harder between the team members'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP18: 'The belief, by the boss, that he is the only one who knows it all and has all the answers, jeopardise the chance of producing a successful project'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP19: 'Missing or delaying milestones is a major cause of project delay and probable failure'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP20: 'Quality of the product is sacrificed for short-term success'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP21: 'Working long hours introduce hazards and health risks'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP22: 'Maintaining friendly relationships between team members improves communication within the team'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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***SP23: 'Fast adaptation to new working environments contribute to the overall success of the project'***

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**SP24: ‘Staying in jobs despite dissatisfaction creates challenges to the management’**

a) Strongly Agree    b) Agree    c) Neutral    d) Disagree    e) Strongly Disagree

Additional comments:

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**APPENDIX 3: SUMMARY OF HOFSTEDE'S CULTURAL DIMENSIONS SCORES (a 120 scale)**

<b>Country</b>	<b>PDI</b>	<b>IDV</b>	<b>MAS</b>	<b>UAI</b>	<b>LTO</b>	<b>IND</b>
China	80	20	66	40	118	
Hong K.	68	25	57	29	96	
Taiwan	58	17	45	69	87	
Japan	54	46	95	92	80	
S. Korea	60	18	39	85	75	
Brazil	69	38	49	76	65	
India	77	48	56	40	61	
Thailand	64	20	34	64	56	
Singapore	74	20	48	8	48	
Netherlands	38	80	14	53	44	
Sweden	31	71	5	29	33	
Australia	36	90	61	51	31	
Germany	35	67	66	65	31	
New Zealand	22	79	58	49	30	
United States	40	91	62	46	29	
Ethiopia	64	27	41	52	25	
Kenya	64	27	41	52	25	
Tanzania	64	27	41	52	25	
United Kingdom	35	89	66	35	25	
Zambia	64	27	41	52	25	
Norway	31	69	8	50	20	
Philippines	94	32	64	44	19	
Ghana	77	20	46	54	16	
Nigeria	77	20	46	54	16	
Sierra Leone	77	20	46	54	16	
Argentina	49	46	56	86		
Austria	11	55	79	70		
Belgium	65	75	54	94		
Chile	63	23	28	86		
Colombia	67	13	64	80		
Costa Rica	35	15	21	86		
Czech Republic	57	58	57	74		
Denmark	18	74	16	23		
Ecuador	78	8	63	67		
Egypt	80	38	52	68		
El Salvador	66	19	40	94		
Finland	33	63	26	59		
France	68	71	43	86		
Greece	60	35	57	112		
Guatemala	95	6	37	101		
Hungary	46	55	88	82		

Indonesia	78	14	46	48		
Iran	58	41	43	59		
Iraq	80	38	52	68		
Ireland	28	70	68	35		
Israel	13	54	47	81		
Italy	50	76	70	75		
Jamaica	45	39	68	13		
Kuwait	80	38	52	68		
Lebanon	80	38	52	68		
Libya	80	38	52	68		
Malaysia	104	26	50	36		
Mexico	81	30	69	82		
Pakistan	55	14	50	70		
Panama	95	11	44	86		
Peru	64	16	42	87		
Poland	68	60	64	93		
Portugal	63	27	31	104		
<b>Saudi Arabia</b>	<b>80</b>	<b>38</b>	<b>52</b>	<b>68</b>		
South Africa	49	65	63	49		
Spain	57	51	42	86		
Switzerland	34	68	70	58		
Turkey	66	37	45	85		
United Arab Emirates	80	38	52	68		
Uruguay	61	36	38	100		
Venezuela	81	12	73	76		

## APPENDIX 4: SUMMARY OF DATA

The results below represent the answers of the 15 respondents (split into 4 different cases) answering 24 sub-propositions.

	1	2	3	4	5	6	7	8	9	10	11	12	13	14	15
SP1	D	A	D	A	A	SA	SD	D	SD	D	A	A	D	A	SA
SP2	SD	N	N	D	SD	SA	D	A	SD	SD	SA	SA	D	N	D
SP3	D	D	D	D	SD	SA	D	A	D	D	N	SD	D	D	D
SP4	N	A	N	N	N	SA	D	D	SA	SD	SA	SA	A	SA	A
SP5	SD	D	D	D	SD	SA	D	A	D	N	N	A	A	A	A
SP6	A	D	A	A	SA	SD	A	A	D	A	SA	D	D	D	D
SP7	SD	D	D	SD	D	SA	SD	SD	SD	D	D	SA	A	A	A
SP8	D	A	D	D	SD	SA	N	A	SD	D	D	A	A	A	D
SP9	A	A	A	N	SA	N	A	N	D	N	D	A	D	A	N
SP10	A	A	A	D	SA	D	SA	A	A	D	A	A	A	A	A
SP11	A	A	A	A	SA	SA	A	D	SA	N	A	A	D	D	N
SP12	D	A	N	A	D	SA	D	A	D	D	D	D	A	A	A
SP13	A	A	A	A	N	SD	SA	A	A	SA	SA	D	D	D	D
SP14	SA	A	A	SA	SA	SA	A	A	SA	D	A	SA	A	A	A
SP15	D	D	N	N	SD	SD	D	SD	SD	A	SA	D	D	D	D
SP16	SA	D	N	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	N	A	SA	A	A	A
SP17	SA	D	A	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	A	A	A	D	A	A
SP18	SA	A	A	D	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	A	SA	A	SA	A
SP19	SA	N	A	A	SA	D	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	A	A	A	A
SP20	SA	A	A	N	SA	SA	D	A	SA	SA	A	A	A	A	D
SP21	SA	A	A	A	A	A	A	SA	SA	A	SA	A	SA	A	A
SP22	SA	A	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	A	A
SP23	SA	A	A	A	SA	SA	SA	A	SA	A	SA	SA	A	A	A
SP24	SA	A	A	SA	A	SA	SA	SA	SA	SA	A	SA	D	A	A

**SA:** strongly agree    **A:** Agree    **N:** Neutral    **D:** Disagree    **SD:** Strongly Disagree

**Respondents:** 1 through 6 (**Case A**), 7 through 9 (**Case B**), 10 through 11 (**Case C**), 12 through 15 (**Case D**)

## APPENDIX 5: MOST FREQUENT RESPONSES

The results below represent the most frequent responses for the private and public sector interviewees, based on the five-point Likert Scale.

Strongly Agree = **SA** Agree = **A** Neutral = **N** Disagree = **D** Strongly Disagree = **SD**

Statement	Frequency - Private Sector					Frequency - Public Sector				
	SA	A	N	D	SD	SA	A	N	D	SD
<b>SP1</b>	1	4	0	4	2	1	2	0	1	0
<b>SP2</b>	2	1	2	2	4	1	0	1	2	0
<b>SP3</b>	1	1	1	7	1	0	0	0	3	1
<b>SP4</b>	3	1	4	2	1	2	2	0	0	0
<b>SP5</b>	1	1	2	5	2	0	4	0	0	0
<b>SP6</b>	2	6	0	2	1	0	0	0	4	0
<b>SP7</b>	1	0	0	5	5	1	3	0	0	0
<b>SP8</b>	1	2	1	5	2	0	3	0	1	0
<b>SP9</b>	1	4	4	2	0	0	2	1	1	0
<b>SP10</b>	2	6	0	3	0	0	4	0	0	0
<b>SP11</b>	3	6	1	1	0	0	1	1	2	0
<b>SP12</b>	1	3	1	6	0	0	3	0	1	0
<b>SP13</b>	3	6	1	0	1	0	0	0	4	0
<b>SP14</b>	5	5	0	1	0	1	3	0	0	0
<b>SP15</b>	1	1	2	3	4	0	0	0	4	0
<b>SP16</b>	6	2	2	1	0	1	3	0	0	0
<b>SP17</b>	5	5	0	1	0	0	3	0	1	0
<b>SP18</b>	6	4	0	1	0	2	2	0	0	0
<b>SP19</b>	6	3	1	1	0	0	4	0	0	0
<b>SP20</b>	5	4	1	1	0	0	3	0	1	0
<b>SP21</b>	4	7	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0
<b>SP22</b>	8	3	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0
<b>SP23</b>	6	5	0	0	0	1	3	0	0	0
<b>SP24</b>	7	4	0	0	0	1	2	0	1	0

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